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MEN'S NUMBER



"A Man Interfering in a Street Fight, from Images of Spain Album (F), 82"
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CHESTNUT-BURR XXV--BILL NYE ESSAYS A NOVELETTE.

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Bill Nye's Chestnuts Old and New*, by Bill Nye

_Harry Bevens--Fanny Buttonhook--True Love Takes its Usual Course--A
Letter to Fanny--A Sweet, Short, Summer--A Happy Marriage--Little
Birdie._

|I never wrote a novel, because I always thought it required more of a
mashed raspberry imagination than I could muster, but I was the business
manager, once, for a year and a half, of a little two-bit novelette that
has never been published.

I now propose to publish it, because I cannot keep it to myself any
longer.

Allow me, therefore, to reminisce.

Harry Bevens was an old schoolmate of mine in the days of $([x-y]/2)^3$, and
although Bevens was not his sure-enough name, it will answer for the

purposes herein set forth. At the time of which I now speak he was more bashful than a book agent, and was trying to promote a cream-colored mustache and buff "Done-gals" on the side.

Suffice it to say that he was madly in love with Fanny Buttonhook, and too bashful to say so by telephone.

Her name wasn't Buttonhook, but I will admit it for the sake of argument. Harry lived over at Kalamazoo, we will say, and Fanny at Oshkosh. These were not the exact names of the towns, but I desire to bewilder the public, in order to avoid any harrassing disclosures in the future. It is always well enough, I find, to deal gently with those who are alive and moderately muscular.

Young Bevans was not specially afraid of old man Buttonhook, or his wife. He didn't dread the enraged parent worth a cent. He wasn't afraid of anybody under the cerulean dome, in fact, except Miss Buttonhook, but when she sailed down the main street, Harry lowered his colors and dodged into the first place he found open, whether it was a millinery store or a livery stable.

Once, in an unguarded moment, he passed so near her that the gentle south wind caught up the cherry ribbon that Miss Buttonhook wore at her throat, and slapped Mr. Bevans across the cheek with it before he knew what ailed him. There was a little vision of straw hat, brown hair, and pink-and-white cuticle, as it were, a delicate odor of violets, the "swish" of a summer silk, and my friend, Mr. Bevans, put his hand to his head, like a man who has a sun-stroke, and fell into a drug store and a state of wild mash, ruin and hopeless chaos.

His bashfulness was not seated nor chronic. It was the varioloid, and didn't hurt him only when Miss Buttonhook was present, or in sight. He was polite and chatty with other girls, and even dared to be blithe and gay sometimes, too, but when Frances loomed up in the distance, he would climb a rail fence nine feet high to evade her.

He told me once that he wished I would erect the frame-work of a letter to Fanny, in which he desired to ask that he might open up a correspondence with her.

He would copy and mail it, he said, and he was sure that I, being a disinterested party, would be perfectly calm.

I wrote a letter for him of which I was moderately proud. It would melt the point on a lightning rod, it seemed to me, for it was just as full of gentleness and poetic soothe as it could be, and Tupper. Webster's Dictionary and my scrap book had to give down first rate. Still it was manly and square-toed. It was another man's confession, and I made it

bulge out with frankness and candor.

As luck would have it, I went over to Oshkosh about the time Harry's prize epistle reached that metropolis, and having been a confidant of Miss B.'s from early childhood. I had the pleasure of reading Bev's letter, and advising the young lady about the correspondence.

Finally a bright thought struck her. She went over to an easy chair, and sat down on her foot, coolly proposing that I should outline a letter replying to Harry's, in a reserved and rather frigid manner, yet bidding him dare to hope that if his orthography and punctuation continued correct, he might write occasionally, though it must be considered entirely _sub rosa_ and abnormally _entre-nous_ on account of "Pa."

By the way. "Pa" was a druggist, and one of the salts of the earth--Epsom salts of course.

I agreed to write the letter, swore never to reveal the secret workings of the order, the grips, explanations, passwords and signals, and then wrote her a nice, demure, startled-fawn letter, as brief as the collar to a party dress, and as solemn as the Declaration of Independence.

Then I said good-by, and returned to my own home, which was neither in Kalamazoo nor Oshkosh. There I received a flat letter from William Henry Bevans, inclosing one from Fanny, and asking for suggestions as to a reply. Her letter was in Miss Buttonhook's best vein. I remember having written it myself.

Well, to cut a long story short, every other week I wrote a letter for Fanny, and on intervening weeks I wrote one for the lover at Kalamazoo. By keeping copies of all letters written, I had a record showing where I was, and avoided saying the same pleasant things twice.

Thus the short, sweet summer scooted past. The weeks were filled with gladness, and their memory even now comes back to me, like a wood-violet-scented vision. A wood-violet-scented vision comes high, but it is necessary in this place.

Toward winter the correspondence grew a little tedious, owing to the fact that I had a large and tropical boil on the back of my neck, which refused to declare its intentions or come to a focus, for three weeks. In looking over the letters of both lovers yesterday, I could tell by the tone of each just where this boil began to grow up, as it were, between two fond hearts.

This feeling grew till the middle of December, when there was a red-hot quarrel. It was exciting and spirited, and after I had alternately flattered myself first from Kalamazoo and then from Oshkosh, it was

a genuine luxury to have a row with myself through the medium of the United States mails.

Then I made up and got reconciled. I thought it would be best to secure harmony before the holidays, so that Harry could go over to Oshkosh and spend Christmas. I therefore wrote a letter for Harry in which he said he had, no doubt, been hasty, and he was sorry. It should not occur again. The days had been like weary ages since their quarrel, he said--vicariously, of course--and the light had been shut out of his erstwhile joyous life. Death would be a luxury unless she forgave him, and Hades would be one long, sweet picnic and lawn festival unless she blessed him with her smile.

You can judge how an old newspaper reporter, with a scarlet imagination, would naturally dash the color into another man's picture of humility and woe.

She replied--by proxy--that he was not to blame. It was her waspish temper and cruel thoughtlessness. She wished he would come over and take dinner with them on Christmas day and she would tell him how sorry she was. When the man admits that he's a brute and the woman says she's sorry, it behooves the eagle eye of the casual spectator to look up into the blue sky for a quarter of an hour, till the reconciliation has had a chance and the brute has been given time to wipe a damp sob from his coat-collar.

I was invited to the Christmas dinner. As a successful reversible amanuensis I thought I deserved it. I was proud and happy. I had passed through a lover's quarrel and sailed in with white-winged peace on time, and now I reckoned that the second joint, with an irregular fragment of cranberry jelly, and some of the dressing, and a little of the white meat please, was nothing more than right.

Mr. Bevans forgot to be bashful twice during the day, and even smiled once also. He began to get acquainted with Fanny after dinner, and praised her beautiful letters. She blushed clear up under her "wave," and returned the compliment.

That was natural. When he praised her letters I did not wonder, and when she praised his I admitted that she was eminently correct. I never witnessed better taste on the part of two young and trusting hearts.

After Christmas I thought they would both feel like buying a manual and doing their own writing, but they did not dare to do so evidently. They seemed to be afraid the change would be detected, so I piloted them into the middle of the succeeding fall, and then introduced the crisis into both their lives.

It was a success.

I felt about as well as though I were to be cut down myself and married off in the very prime of life. Fanny wore the usual clothing adopted by young ladies who are about to be sacrificed to a great horrid man. I cannot give the exact description of her trousseau, but she looked like a hazel-eyed angel, with a freckle on the bridge of her nose. The groom looked a little scared, and moved his gloved hands as though they weighed twenty-one pounds apiece.

However, it's all over now. I was up there recently to see them. They are quite happy. Not too happy, but just happy enough. They call their oldest son Birdie. I wanted them to call him William, but they were headstrong and named him Birdie. That wounded my pride, and so I called him Earlie Birdie.



ORNAMENTS

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *A Thousand and One Afternoons in Chicago*
by Ben Hecht

Ornaments change, and perhaps not for the best. The scherzo architecture of Villon's Paris, the gabled caprice of Shakespeare's London, the Rip Van Winkle jauntiness of a vanished New York, these are ghosts that wander among the skyscrapers and dynamo beltings of modernity.

One by one the charming blunders of the past have been set to rights. Highways are no longer the casual folderols of adventure, but the reposeful and efficient arteries of traffic. The roofs of the town are no longer a rumble of idiotic hats cocked at a devil-may-care angle. Windows no longer wink lopsidedly at one another. Doorways and chimneys, railings and lanterns have changed. Cobblestones and dirt have vanished, at least officially.

Towns once were like improvised little melodramas. Men once wore their backgrounds as they wore their clothes--to fit their moods. A cap and feather, a gable and a latticed window for romance. A glove and rapier, a turret and a postern gate for adventure. And for our immemorial friend Routine a humpty-dumpty jumble of alleys, feather pens, cobblestones, echoing stairways and bouncing milk carts.

* * * * *

These things have all been properly corrected. Today the city frowns from one end to the other like a highly efficient and insanely practical platitude. Mood has given way to mode. An essential evolution, alas! D'Artagnan wore his Paris as a cloak. And perhaps Mr. Insull wears his Chicago as a shirt front. But most of us have parted company with the town. It is a background designed and marvelously executed for our conveniences. The great metronomes of the loop with their million windows, the deft crisscross of streets, the utilitarian miracles of plumbing, doorways, heating systems and passenger carriers--these are monuments to our collective sanity.

But if one is insane, if one has inherited one's grandfather's characteristics as idler, loafer, lounge, dreamer, lover or picaroon, what then? Eh, one stays at home and tells it to the typewriter or, more likely, one gets run down, chewed up and bespattered while darting across State Street in quest of an invigorating vanilla phosphate.

* * * * *

Nevertheless--there's a word that speaks innate optimism, nevertheless, there are things which do not change as logically as do ornaments. Men and women, for instance. And although the town wears its mask of deplorable sanity and though Sunnyside Avenue seems suavely reminiscent of Von Bissing's troops goose-stepping through Belgium--there are men and women.

One naturally inquires, where? Quite so, where are there men and women in the city? One sees crowds. But men and women are lost. One observes crowds answering the advertisements. The advertisements say, come here, go there. And one sees men and women devotedly bent upon rewarding the advertisers.

Again, nevertheless, there are other observations to make. There are the taxicabs. Here in the taxicabs one may still observe men and women. Villon's Paris, Shakespeare's London and vanished New York, these are crowded into the taxicabs. In the taxicabs men and women still wear the furtive, illogical, questing, mysterious devil-may-care, wasterel adventure masks of their grandfathers' yesterdays.

* * * * *

What ho! A devilishly involved argument, that, when the taxicab owners plume themselves upon being the last word in the matter of deplorable efficiency, the ultimate gasp in the business of convenience! Nevertheless, although Mr. Hertz points with proper scorn to the sedan chair, the palanquin, the ox cart and the Ringling Brothers' racing chariots, we sweep a three-dollar fedora across the ground, raise our eyebrows and smile mysteriously to ourselves.

For on the days when our insanities grow somewhat persistent there is a solace in the spectacle of taxicabs that none of the advertisements of Mr. Hertz or his; contemporaries can take away. For odds bodkins! gaze you through the little windows of these taxicabs. Pretty gals leaning forward eager-eyed, lips parted, with an air of piquing rendezvous to the parasols clutched in their dainty hands. Plump, heavy-jowled dandies reclining like tailored paladins in the leather cushions. Keen-eyed youths surrounded with heaps of bags and cases on a carefully lined quest. Nervous old women, mysteriously ragged creatures, rakish silk hats, bundles of children with staring fingers, strangely mustachioed and ribald-necked gentry.

* * * * *

A goodly company. A teasing procession for the eye and the thought. The cabs shoot by, caracoling through the orderly lines of traffic; zigzags of yellow, green, blue, lavender, black and white snorting along with a fine disdain. They speak of destinations reminiscent of the postern gate and the latticed window; of the waiting barque and the glowing tavern.

Of the crowds on the pavements; of the crowds in the passenger cars, elevators, lobbies, one wonders little where they are going. Answering advertisements, forsooth. Vertebrate brothers of the codfish. But these others! Ah, one stands on the curb with the vanilla phosphate playing havoc with one's blood and wonders a hatful.

These sybarites of the taxis are going somewhere. Make no doubt of that. These insanely assorted creatures bouncing on the leather cushions are launched upon mysterious and important enterprises. And these bold-looking jehus, black eyed, hard mouthed--a fetching tribe! A cross between Acroceraunian bandits and Samaritans. One may stare at a taxi scooting by and think with no incongruity of Carlyle's "Night of Spurs"--with Louis and his harried Antoinette flying the guillotine. And of other things which our inefficient memory prevents us from jotting down at this moment. But of other things.

Journalism is incomplete without its moral or at least its overtones of morals. And we come to that now as an honest reporter should. Our moral is very simple. Any good platitudinarian will already have forestalled it. It is that the goodly company riding about in these taxicabs upon which we have been speculating are none other than these codfish of the pavements. The same, messieurs. A fact which gives us hope; briefly, hope for the fact that the world is not as sane as it looks and that, despite all the fine strivings of construction engineers, plumbers, advertisers and the like, men and women still preserve the quaint spirit of disorder and melodrama which once lived in the ornaments of the town.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Browning's Shorter Poems*, by Robert Browning

Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop--
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since 10
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

Now,--the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to (else they run
Into one),
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires 20
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone-- 30
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

Now,--the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored, 40
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks

Thro' the chinks--
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

And I know--while thus the quiet-coloured eve
Smiles to leave 50
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray
Melt away--
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come, 60

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,--and then,
All the men!
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face, 70
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force--
Gold, of course.
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns 80
For whole centuries of folly, noise, and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
Love is best.



A FOOTNOTE ON THE DUEL OF SEX

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Damn!*, by Henry Louis Mencken

If I were a woman I should want to be a blonde, with golden, silky hair, pink cheeks and sky-blue eyes. It would not bother me to think that this color scheme was mistaken by the world for a flaunting badge of stupidity; I would have a better arm in my arsenal than mere intelligence; I would get a husband by easy surrender while the brunettes attempted it vainly by frontal assault.

Men are not easily taken by frontal assault; it is only strategem that can quickly knock them down. To be a blonde, pink, soft and delicate, is to be a strategem. It is to be a ruse, a feint, an ambush. It is to fight under the Red Cross flag. A man sees nothing alert and designing in those pale, crystalline eyes; he sees only something helpless, childish, weak; something that calls to his compassion; something that appeals powerfully to his conceit in his own strength. And so he is taken before he knows that there is a war. He lifts his portcullis in Christian charity--and the enemy is in his citadel.

The brunette can make no such stealthy and sure attack. No matter how subtle her art, she can never hope to quite conceal her intent. Her eyes give her away. They flash and glitter. They have depths. They draw the male gaze into mysterious and sinister recesses. And so the male behind the gaze flies to arms. He may be taken in the end--indeed, he usually is--but he is not taken by surprise; he is not taken without a fight. A brunette has to battle for every inch of her advance. She is confronted by an endless succession of Dead Man's Hills, each equipped with telescopes, semaphores, alarm gongs, wireless. The male sees her clearly through her densest smoke-clouds.... But the blonde captures him under a flag of truce. He regards her tenderly, kindly, almost pityingly, until the moment the gyves are upon his wrists.

It is all an optical matter, a question of color. The pastel shades deceive him; the louder hues send him to his artillery. God help, I say, the red-haired girl! She goes into action with warning pennants flying. The dullest, blindest man can see her a mile away; he can catch the alarming flash of her hair long before he can see the whites, or even the terrible red-browns, of her eyes. She has a long field to cross, heavily under defensive fire, before she can get into rifle range. Her quarry has a chance to throw up redoubts, to dig himself in, to call for

reinforcements, to elude her by ignominious flight. She must win, if she is to win at all, by an unparalleled combination of craft and resolution. She must be swift, daring, merciless. Even the brunette of black and penetrating eye has great advantages over her. No wonder she never lets go, once her arms are around her antagonist's neck! No wonder she is, of all women, the hardest to shake off!

All nature works in circles. Causes become effects; effects develop into causes. The red-haired girl's dire need of courage and cunning has augmented her store of those qualities by the law of natural selection. She is, by long odds, the most intelligent and bemusing of women. She shows cunning, foresight, technique, variety. She always fails a dozen times before she succeeds; but she brings to the final business the abominable expertness of a Ludendorff; she has learnt painfully by the process of trial and error. Red-haired girls are intellectual stimulants. They know all the tricks. They are so clever that they have even cast a false glamour of beauty about their worst defect--their harsh and gaudy hair. They give it euphemistic and deceitful names--auburn, bronze, Titian. They overcome by their hellish arts that deep-seated dread of red which is inborn in all of God's creatures. They charm men with what would even alarm bulls.

And the blondes, by following the law of least resistance, have gone in the other direction. The great majority of them--I speak, of course, of natural blondes; not of the immoral wenches who work their atrocities under cover of a synthetic bloneness--are quite as shallow and stupid as they look. One seldom hears a blonde say anything worth hearing; the most they commonly achieve is a specious, baby-like prattling, an infantile artlessness. But let us not blame them for nature's work. Why, after all, be intelligent? It is, at best, no more than a capacity for unhappiness. The blonde not only doesn't miss it; she is even better off without it. What imaginable intelligence could compensate her for the flat blueness of her eyes, the xanthous pallor of her hair, the doll-like pink of her cheeks? What conceivable cunning could do such execution as her stupendous appeal to masculine vanity, sentimentality, egoism?

If I were a woman I should want to be a blonde. My bloneness might be hideous, but it would get me a husband, and it would make him cherish me and love me.



TRUST

Project Gutenberg's *Brown Wolf and Other Jack London Stories*, by Jack London

All lines had been cast off, and the _Seattle No. 4_ was pulling slowly out from the shore. Her decks were piled high with freight and baggage, and swarmed with a heterogeneous company of Indians, dogs, and dog-mushers, prospectors, traders, and homeward-bound gold-seekers. A goodly portion of Dawson was lined up on the bank, saying good-by. As the gang-plank came in and the steamer nosed into the stream, the clamor of farewell became deafening. Also, in that eleventh moment, everybody began to remember final farewell messages and to shout them back and forth across the widening stretch of water. Louis Bondell, curling his yellow mustache with one hand and languidly waving the other hand to his friends on shore, suddenly remembered something and sprang to the rail.

"Oh, Fred!" he bawled. "Oh, Fred!"

The "Fred" desired thrust a strapping pair of shoulders through the forefront of the crowd on the bank and tried to catch Louis Bondell's message. The latter grew red in the face with vain vociferation. Still the water widened between steamboat and shore.

"Hey you, Captain Scott!" he yelled at the pilot-house. "Stop the boat!"

The gongs clanged, and the big stern wheel reversed, then stopped. All hands on steamboat and on bank took advantage of this respite to exchange final, new, and imperative farewells. More futile than ever was Louis Bondell's effort to make himself heard. The _Seattle No. 4_ lost way and drifted down-stream, and Captain Scott had to go ahead and reverse a second time. His head disappeared inside the pilot-house, coming into view a moment later behind a big megaphone.

Now Captain Scott had a remarkable voice, and the "Shut up!" he launched at the crowd on deck and on shore could have been heard at the top of Moosehide Mountain and as far as Klondike City. This official remonstrance from the pilot-house spread a film of silence over the tumult.

"Now, what do you want to say?" Captain Scott demanded.

"Tell Fred Churchill--he's on the bank there--tell him to go to Macdonald. It's in his safe--a small gripsack of mine. Tell him to get it and bring it out when he comes."

In the silence Captain Scott bellowed the message ashore through the megaphone:--

"You, Fred Churchill, go to Macdonald--in his safe--small gripsack--belongs to Louis Bondell--important! Bring it out when you come! Got it?"

Churchill waved his hand in token that he had got it. In truth, had Macdonald, half a mile away, opened his window, he'd have got it, too. The tumult of farewell rose again, the gongs clanged, and the _Seattle No. 4_ went ahead, swung out into the stream, turned on her heel, and headed down the Yukon, Bondell and Churchill waving farewell and mutual affection to the last.

That was in midsummer. In the fall of the year, the _W.H. Willis_ started up the Yukon with two hundred homeward-bound pilgrims on board. Among them was Churchill. In his stateroom, in the middle of a clothes-bag, was Louis Bondell's grip. It was a small, stout leather affair, and its weight of forty pounds always made Churchill nervous when he wandered too far from it. The man in the adjoining stateroom had a treasure of gold-dust hidden similarly in a clothes-bag, and the pair of them ultimately arranged to stand watch and watch. While one went down to eat, the other kept an eye on the two stateroom doors. When Churchill wanted to take a hand at whist, the other man mounted guard, and when the other man wanted to relax his soul, Churchill read four-months'-old newspapers on a camp stool between the two doors.

There were signs of an early winter, and the question that was discussed from dawn till dark, and far into the dark, was whether they would get out before the freeze-up or be compelled to abandon the steamboat and tramp out over the ice. There were irritating delays. Twice the engines broke down and had to be tinkered up, and each time there were snow flurries to warn them of the imminence of winter. Nine times the _W.H. Willis_ essayed to ascend the Five-Finger Rapids with her impaired machinery, and when she succeeded, she was four days behind her very liberal schedule. The question that then arose was whether or not the steamboat _Flora_ would wait for her above the Box Cañon. The stretch of water between the head of the Box Cañon and the foot of the White Horse Rapids was unnavigable for steamboats and passengers were transshipped at that point, walking around the rapids from one steamboat to the other. There were no telephones in the country, hence no way of

informing the waiting _Flora_ that the _Willis_ was four days late, but coming.

When the _W.H. Willis_ pulled into White Horse, it was learned that the _Flora_ had waited three days over the limit, and had departed only a few hours before. Also, it was learned that she would tie up at Tagish Post till nine o'clock, Sunday morning. It was then four o'clock Saturday afternoon. The pilgrims called a meeting. On board was a large Peterborough canoe, consigned to the police post at the head of Lake Bennett. They agreed to be responsible for it and to deliver it. Next, they called for volunteers. Two men were needed to make a race for the _Flora_. A score of men volunteered on the instant. Among them was Churchill, such being his nature that he volunteered before he thought of Bondell's gripsack. When this thought came to him, he began to hope that he would not be selected; but a man who had made a name as captain of a college football eleven, as a president of an athletic club, as a dog-musher and a stamper in the Yukon, and, moreover, who possessed such shoulders as he, had no right to avoid the honor. It was thrust upon him and upon a gigantic German, Nick Antonsen.

While a crowd of the pilgrims, the canoe on their shoulders, started on a trot over the portage, Churchill ran to his stateroom. He turned the contents of the clothes-bag on the floor and caught up the grip with the intention of intrusting it to the man next door. Then the thought smote him that it was not his grip, and that he had no right to let it out of his own possession. So he dashed ashore with it and ran up the portage, changing it often from one hand to the other, and wondering if it really did not weigh more than forty pounds.

It was half-past four in the afternoon when the two men started. The current of the Thirty Mile River was so strong that rarely could they use the paddles. It was out on one bank with a tow-line over the shoulders stumbling over the rocks, forcing a way through the underbrush, slipping at times and falling into the water, wading often up to the knees and waist; and then, when an insurmountable bluff was encountered, it was into the canoe, out paddles, and a wild and losing dash across the current to the other bank, in paddles, over the side, and out tow-line again. It was exhausting work. Antonsen toiled like the giant he was, uncomplaining, persistent, but driven to his utmost by the powerful body and indomitable brain of Churchill. They never paused for rest. It was go, go, and keep on going. A crisp wind blew down the river, freezing their hands and making it imperative, from time to time, to beat the blood back into the numb fingers. As night came on, they were compelled to trust to luck. They fell repeatedly on the untraveled banks and tore their clothing to shreds in the underbrush they could not see. Both men were badly scratched and bleeding. A dozen times, in their wild dashes from bank to bank, they struck snags and were capsized. The first time this happened, Churchill dived and groped in three feet of

water for the gripsack. He lost half an hour in recovering it, and after that it was carried securely lashed to the canoe. As long as the canoe floated it was safe. Antonsen jeered at the grip, and toward morning began to abuse it; but Churchill vouchsafed no explanations.

Their delays and mischances were endless. On one swift bend, around which poured a healthy young rapid, they lost two hours, making a score of attempts and capsizing twice. At this point, on both banks, were precipitous bluffs, rising out of deep water, and along which they could neither tow nor pole, while they could not gain with the paddles against the current. At each attempt they strained to the utmost with the paddles, and each time, with hearts nigh to bursting from the effort, they were played out and swept back. They succeeded finally by an accident. In the swiftest current, near the end of another failure, a freak of the current sheered the canoe out of Churchill's control and flung it against the bluff. Churchill made a blind leap at the bluff and landed in a crevice. Holding on with one hand, he held the swamped canoe with the other till Antonsen dragged himself out of the water. Then they pulled the canoe out and rested. A fresh start at this crucial point took them by. They landed on the bank above and plunged immediately ashore and into the brush with the tow-line.

Daylight found them far below Tagish Post. At nine o'clock Sunday morning they could hear the _Flora_ whistling her departure. And when, at ten o'clock, they dragged themselves in to the Post, they could just barely see the _Flora's_ smoke far to the southward. It was a pair of worn-out tatterdemalions that Captain Jones of the Mounted Police welcomed and fed, and he afterward averred that they possessed two of the most tremendous appetites he had ever observed. They lay down and slept in their wet rags by the stove. At the end of two hours Churchill got up, carried Bondell's grip, which he had used for a pillow, down to the canoe, kicked Antonsen awake, and started in pursuit of the _Flora_.

"There's no telling what might happen--machinery break down or something," was his reply to Captain Jones's expostulations. "I'm going to catch that steamer and send her back for the boys."

Tagish Lake was white with a fall gale that blew in their teeth. Big, swinging seas rushed upon the canoe, compelling one man to bail and leaving one man to paddle. Headway could not be made. They ran along the shallow shore and went overboard, one man ahead on the tow-line, the other shoving on the canoe. They fought the gale up to their waists in the icy water, often up to their necks, often over their heads and buried by the big, crested waves. There was no rest, never a moment's pause from the cheerless, heart-breaking battle. That night, at the head of Tagish Lake, in the thick of a driving snow-squall, they overhauled the _Flora_. Antonsen fell on board, lay where he had fallen, and snored. Churchill looked like a wild man. His clothes barely clung to him. His

face was iced up and swollen from the protracted effort of twenty-four hours, while his hands were so swollen that he could not close the fingers. As for his feet, it was an agony to stand upon them.

The captain of the Flora was loath to go back to White Horse. Churchill was persistent and imperative; the captain was stubborn. He pointed out finally that nothing was to be gained by going back, because the only ocean steamer at Dyea, the Athenian, was to sail on Tuesday morning, and that he could not make the back trip to White Horse and bring up the stranded pilgrims in time to make the connection.

"What time does the Athenian sail?" Churchill demanded.

"Seven o'clock, Tuesday morning."

"All right," Churchill said, at the same time kicking a tattoo on the ribs of the snoring Antonsen. "You go back to White Horse. We'll go ahead and hold the Athenian."

Antonsen, stupid with sleep, not yet clothed in his waking mind, was bundled into the canoe, and did not realize what had happened till he was drenched with the icy spray of a big sea, and heard Churchill snarling at him through the darkness:--

"Paddle, can't you! Do you want to be swamped?"

Daylight found them at Caribou Crossing, the wind dying down, and Antonsen too far gone to dip a paddle. Churchill grounded the canoe on a quiet beach, where they slept. He took the precaution of twisting his arm under the weight of his head. Every few minutes the pain of the pent circulation aroused him, whereupon he would look at his watch and twist the other arm under his head. At the end of two hours he fought with Antonsen to rouse him. Then they started. Lake Bennett, thirty miles in length, was like a mill-pond; but, halfway across, a gale from the south smote them and turned the water white. Hour after hour they repeated the struggle on Tagish, over the side, pulling and shoving on the canoe, up to their waists and necks, and over their heads, in the icy water; toward the last the good-natured giant played completely out. Churchill drove him mercilessly; but when he pitched forward and bade fair to drown in three feet of water, the other dragged him into the canoe. After that, Churchill fought on alone, arriving at the police post at the head of Bennett in the early afternoon. He tried to help Antonsen out of the canoe, but failed. He listened to the exhausted man's heavy breathing, and envied him when he thought of what he himself had yet to undergo. Antonsen could lie there and sleep; but he, behind time, must go on over mighty Chilcoot and down to the sea. The real struggle lay before him, and he almost regretted the strength that resided in his frame because of the torment it could inflict upon that frame.

Churchill pulled the canoe up on the beach, seized Bondell's grip, and started on a limping dog-trot for the police post.

"There's a canoe down there, consigned to you from Dawson," he hurled at the officer who answered his knock. "And there's a man in it pretty near dead. Nothing serious; only played out. Take care of him. I've got to rush. Good-by. Want to catch the _Athenian_."

A mile portage connected Lake Bennett and Lake Linderman, and his last words he flung back after him as he resumed the trot. It was a very painful trot, but he clenched his teeth and kept on, forgetting his pain most of the time in the fervent heat with which he regarded the gripsack. It was a severe handicap. He swung it from one hand to the other, and back again. He tucked it under his arm. He threw one hand over the opposite shoulder, and the bag bumped and pounded on his back as he ran along. He could scarcely hold it in his bruised and swollen fingers, and several times he dropped it. Once, in changing from one hand to the other, it escaped his clutch and fell in front of him, tripped him up, and threw him violently to the ground.

At the far end of the portage he bought an old set of pack-straps for a dollar, and in them he swung the grip. Also, he chartered a launch to run him the six miles to the upper end of Lake Linderman, where he arrived at four in the afternoon. The _Athenian_ was to sail from Dyea next morning at seven. Dyea was twenty-eight miles away, and between towered Chilcoot. He sat down to adjust his foot-gear for the long climb, and woke up. He had dozed the instant he sat down, though he had not slept thirty seconds. He was afraid his next doze might be longer, so he finished fixing his foot-gear standing up. Even then he was overpowered for a fleeting moment. He experienced the flash of unconsciousness; becoming aware of it, in midair, as his relaxed body was sinking to the ground and as he caught himself together, he stiffened his muscles with a spasmodic wrench, and escaped the fall. The sudden jerk back to consciousness left him sick and trembling. He beat his head with the heel of his hand, knocking wakefulness into the numb brain.

Jack Burns's pack-train was starting back light for Crater Lake, and Churchill was invited to a mule. Burns wanted to put the gripsack on another animal, but Churchill held on to it, carrying it on his saddle-pommel. But he dozed, and the grip persisted in dropping off the pommel, one side or the other, each time wakening him with a sickening start. Then, in the early darkness, Churchill's mule brushed him against a projecting branch that laid his cheek open. To cap it, the mule blundered off the trail and fell, throwing rider and gripsack out upon the rocks. After that, Churchill walked, or stumbled, rather, over the apology for a trail, leading the mule. Stray and awful odors, drifting

from each side the trail, told of the horses that had died in the rush for gold. But he did not mind. He was too sleepy. By the time Long Lake was reached, however, he had recovered from his sleepiness; and at Deep Lake he resigned the gripsack to Burns. But thereafter, by the light of the dim stars, he kept his eyes on Burns. There were not going to be any accidents with that bag.

At Crater Lake the pack-train went into camp, and Churchill, slinging the grip on his back, started the steep climb for the summit. For the first time, on that precipitous wall, he realized how tired he was. He crept and crawled like a crab, burdened by the weight of his limbs. A distinct and painful effort of will was required each time he lifted a foot. An hallucination came to him that he was shod with lead, like a deep-sea diver, and it was all he could do to resist the desire to reach down and feel the lead. As for Bondell's gripsack, it was inconceivable that forty pounds could weigh so much. It pressed him down like a mountain, and he looked back with unbelief to the year before, when he had climbed that same pass with a hundred and fifty pounds on his back, If those loads had weighed a hundred and fifty pounds, then Bondell's grip weighed five hundred.

The first rise of the divide from Crater Lake was across a small glacier. Here was a well-defined trail. But above the glacier, which was also above timber-line, was naught but a chaos of naked rock and enormous boulders. There was no way of seeing the trail in the darkness, and he blundered on, paying thrice the ordinary exertion for all that he accomplished. He won the summit in the thick of howling wind and driving snow, providentially stumbling upon a small, deserted tent, into which he crawled. There he found and bolted some ancient fried potatoes and half a dozen raw eggs.

When the snow ceased and the wind eased down, he began the almost impossible descent. There was no trail, and he stumbled and blundered, often finding himself, at the last moment, on the edge of rocky walls and steep slopes the depth of which he had no way of judging. Part way down, the stars clouded over again, and in the consequent obscurity he slipped and rolled and slid for a hundred feet, landing bruised and bleeding on the bottom of a large shallow hole. From all about him arose the stench of dead horses. The hole was handy to the trail, and the packers had made a practice of tumbling into it their broken and dying animals. The stench overpowered him, making him deathly sick, and as in a nightmare he scrambled out. Halfway up, he recollected Bondell's gripsack. It had fallen into the hole with him; the pack-strap had evidently broken, and he had forgotten it. Back he went into the pestilential charnel-pit, where he crawled around on hands and knees and groped for half an hour. Altogether he encountered and counted seventeen dead horses (and one horse still alive that he shot with his revolver) before he found Bondell's grip. Looking back upon a life that had not

been without valor and achievement, he unhesitatingly declared to himself that this return after the grip was the most heroic act he had ever performed. So heroic was it that he was twice on the verge of fainting before he crawled out of the hole.

By the time he had descended to the Scales, the steep pitch of Chilcoot was past, and the way became easier. Not that it was an easy way, however, in the best of places; but it became a really possible trail, along which he could have made good time if he had not been worn out, if he had had light with which to pick his steps, and if it had not been for Bondell's gripsack. To him, in his exhausted condition, it was the last straw. Having barely strength to carry himself along, the additional weight of the grip was sufficient to throw him nearly every time he tripped or stumbled. And when he escaped tripping, branches reached out in the darkness, hooked the grip between his shoulders, and held him back.

His mind was made up that if he missed the Athenian it would be the fault of the gripsack. In fact, only two things remained in his consciousness--Bondell's grip and the steamer. He knew only those two things, and they became identified, in a way, with some stern mission upon which he had journeyed and toiled for centuries. He walked and struggled on as in a dream. A part of the dream was his arrival at Sheep Camp. He stumbled into a saloon, slid his shoulders out of the straps, and started to deposit the grip at his feet. But it slipped from his fingers and struck the floor with a heavy thud that was not unnoticed by two men who were just leaving. Churchill drank a glass of whiskey, told the barkeeper to call him in ten minutes, and sat down, his feet on the grip, his head on his knees.

So badly did his misused body stiffen, that when he was called it required another ten minutes and a second glass of whiskey to unbend his joints and limber up the muscles.

"Hey! not that way!" the barkeeper shouted, and then went after him and started him through the darkness toward Canyon City. Some little husk of inner consciousness told Churchill that the direction was right, and, still as in a dream, he took the canyon trail. He did not know what warned him, but after what seemed several centuries of travelling, he sensed danger and drew his revolver. Still in the dream, he saw two men step out and heard them halt him. His revolver went off four times, and he saw the flashes and heard the explosions of their revolvers. Also, he was aware that he had been hit in the thigh. He saw one man go down, and, as the other came for him, he smashed him a straight blow with the heavy revolver full in the face. Then he turned and ran. He came from the dream shortly afterward, to find himself plunging down the trail at a limping lope. His first thought was for the gripsack. It was still on his back. He was convinced that what had happened was a dream till he

felt for his revolver and found it gone. Next he became aware of a sharp stinging of his thigh, and after investigating, he found his hand warm with blood. It was a superficial wound, but it was incontestable. He became wider awake, and kept up the lumbering run to Canyon City.

He found a man, with a team of horses and a wagon, who got out of bed and harnessed up for twenty dollars. Churchill crawled in on the wagon-bed and slept, the gripsack still on his back. It was a rough ride, over water-washed boulders down the Dyea Valley; but he roused only when the wagon hit the highest places. Any altitude of his body above the wagon-bed of less than a foot did not faze him. The last mile was smooth going, and he slept soundly.

He came to in the gray dawn, the driver shaking him savagely and howling into his ear that the _Athenian_ was gone. Churchill looked blankly at the deserted harbor.

"There's a smoke over at Skaguay," the man said.

Churchill's eyes were too swollen to see that far, but he said: "It's she. Get me a boat."

The driver was obliging, and found a skiff and a man to row it for ten dollars, payment in advance. Churchill paid, and was helped into the skiff. It was beyond him to get in by himself. It was six miles to Skaguay, and he had a blissful thought of sleeping those six miles. But the man did not know how to row, and Churchill took the oars and toiled for a few more centuries. He never knew six longer and more excruciating miles. A snappy little breeze blew up the inlet and held him back. He had a gone feeling at the pit of the stomach, and suffered from faintness and numbness. At his command, the man took the bailer and threw salt water into his face.

The _Athenian's_ anchor was up-and-down when they came alongside, and Churchill was at the end of his last remnant of strength.

"Stop her! Stop her!" he shouted hoarsely. "Important message! Stop her!"

Then he dropped his chin on his chest and slept. "When half a dozen men started to carry him up the gang-plank, he awoke, reached for the grip, and clung to it like a drowning man. On deck he became a center of horror and curiosity. The clothing in which he had left White Horse was represented by a few rags, and he was as frayed as his clothing. He had traveled for fifty-five hours at the top notch of endurance. He had slept six hours in that time, and he was twenty pounds lighter than when he started. Face and hands and body were scratched and bruised, and he could scarcely see. He tried to stand up, but failed, sprawling out on

the deck, hanging on to the gripsack, and delivering his message.

"Now, put me to bed," he finished; "I'll eat when I wake up."

They did him honor, carrying him down in his rags and dirt and depositing him and Bondell's grip in the bridal chamber, which was the biggest and most luxurious stateroom in the ship. Twice he slept the clock around, and he had bathed and shaved and eaten and was leaning over the rail smoking a cigar when the two hundred pilgrims from White Horse came alongside.

By the time the _Athenian_ arrived in Seattle, Churchill had fully recuperated, and he went ashore with Bondell's grip in his hand. He felt proud of that grip. To him it stood for achievement and integrity and trust. "I've delivered the goods," was the way he expressed these various high terms to himself. It was early in the evening, and he went straight to Bondell's home. Louis Bondell was glad to see him, shaking hands with both hands at the same time and dragging him into the house.

"Oh, thanks, old man; it was good of you to bring it out," Bondell said when he received the gripsack.

He tossed it carelessly upon a couch, and Churchill noted with an appreciative eye the rebound of its weight from the springs. Bondell was volleying him with questions.

"How did you make out? How're the boys! What became of Bill Smithers? Is Del Bishop still with Pierce? Did he sell my dogs? How did Sulphur Bottom show up? You're looking fine. What steamer did you come out on?"

To all of which Churchill gave answer, till half an hour had gone by and the first lull in the conversation had arrived.

"Hadn't you better take a look at it?" he suggested, nodding his head at the gripsack.

"Oh, it's all right," Bondell answered. "Did Mitchell's dump turn out as much as he expected?"

"I think you'd better look at it," Churchill insisted. "When I deliver a thing, I want to be satisfied that it's all right. There's always the chance that somebody might have got into it when I was asleep, or something."

"It's nothing important, old man," Bondell answered, with a laugh.

"Nothing important," Churchill echoed in a faint, small voice. Then he spoke with decision: "Louis, what's in that bag? I want to know."

Louis looked at him curiously, then left the room and returned with a bunch of keys. He inserted his hand and drew out a heavy .44 Colt's revolver. Next came out a few boxes of ammunition for the revolver and several boxes of Winchester cartridges.

Churchill took the gripsack and looked into it. Then he turned it upside down and shook it gently.

"The gun's all rusted," Bondell said. "Must have been out in the rain."

"Yes," Churchill answered. "Too bad it got wet. I guess I was a bit careless."

He got up and went outside. Ten minutes later Louis Bondell went out and found him on the steps, sitting down, elbows on knees and chin on hands, gazing steadfastly out into the darkness.



EVELINE

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Dubliners*, by James Joyce

SHE sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She was tired.

Few people passed. The man out of the last house passed on his way home; she heard his footsteps clacking along the concrete pavement and afterwards crunching on the cinder path before the new red houses. One time there used to be a field there in which they used to play every evening with other people's children. Then a man from Belfast bought the field and built houses in it--not like their little brown houses but bright brick houses with shining roofs. The children of the avenue used to play together in that field--the Devines, the Waters, the Dunns, little Keogh the cripple, she and her brothers and sisters. Ernest, however, never played: he was too grown up. Her father used often to hunt them in out of the field with his blackthorn stick; but usually little Keogh used to keep nix and call out when he saw her father

coming. Still they seemed to have been rather happy then. Her father was not so bad then; and besides, her mother was alive. That was a long time ago; she and her brothers and sisters were all grown up; her mother was dead. Tizzie Dunn was dead, too, and the Waters had gone back to England. Everything changes. Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home.

Home! She looked round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years, wondering where on earth all the dust came from. Perhaps she would never see again those familiar objects from which she had never dreamed of being divided. And yet during all those years she had never found out the name of the priest whose yellowing photograph hung on the wall above the broken harmonium beside the coloured print of the promises made to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. He had been a school friend of her father. Whenever he showed the photograph to a visitor her father used to pass it with a casual word:

"He is in Melbourne now."

She had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise? She tried to weigh each side of the question. In her home anyway she had shelter and food; she had those whom she had known all her life about her. Of course she had to work hard, both in the house and at business. What would they say of her in the Stores when they found out that she had run away with a fellow? Say she was a fool, perhaps; and her place would be filled up by advertisement. Miss Gavan would be glad. She had always had an edge on her, especially whenever there were people listening.

"Miss Hill, don't you see these ladies are waiting?"

"Look lively, Miss Hill, please."

She would not cry many tears at leaving the Stores.

But in her new home, in a distant unknown country, it would not be like that. Then she would be married--she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then. She would not be treated as her mother had been. Even now, though she was over nineteen, she sometimes felt herself in danger of her father's violence. She knew it was that that had given her the palpitations. When they were growing up he had never gone for her like he used to go for Harry and Ernest, because she was a girl; but latterly he had begun to threaten her and say what he would do to her only for her dead mother's sake. And now she had nobody to protect her. Ernest was dead and Harry, who was in the church decorating business, was nearly always down somewhere in the country. Besides, the invariable squabble for money on Saturday nights had begun to weary her unspeakably. She

always gave her entire wages--seven shillings--and Harry always sent up what he could but the trouble was to get any money from her father. He said she used to squander the money, that she had no head, that he wasn't going to give her his hard-earned money to throw about the streets, and much more, for he was usually fairly bad of a Saturday night. In the end he would give her the money and ask her had she any intention of buying Sunday's dinner. Then she had to rush out as quickly as she could and do her marketing, holding her black leather purse tightly in her hand as she elbowed her way through the crowds and returning home late under her load of provisions. She had hard work to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly. It was hard work--a hard life--but now that she was about to leave it she did not find it a wholly undesirable life.

She was about to explore another life with Frank. Frank was very kind, manly, open-hearted. She was to go away with him by the night-boat to be his wife and to live with him in Buenos Ayres where he had a home waiting for her. How well she remembered the first time she had seen him; he was lodging in a house on the main road where she used to visit. It seemed a few weeks ago. He was standing at the gate, his peaked cap pushed back on his head and his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze. Then they had come to know each other. He used to meet her outside the Stores every evening and see her home. He took her to see The Bohemian Girl and she felt elated as she sat in an unaccustomed part of the theatre with him. He was awfully fond of music and sang a little. People knew that they were courting and, when he sang about the lass that loves a sailor, she always felt pleasantly confused. He used to call her Poppens out of fun. First of all it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him. He had tales of distant countries. He had started as a deck boy at a pound a month on a ship of the Allan Line going out to Canada. He told her the names of the ships he had been on and the names of the different services. He had sailed through the Straits of Magellan and he told her stories of the terrible Patagonians. He had fallen on his feet in Buenos Ayres, he said, and had come over to the old country just for a holiday. Of course, her father had found out the affair and had forbidden her to have anything to say to him.

"I know these sailor chaps," he said.

One day he had quarrelled with Frank and after that she had to meet her lover secretly.

The evening deepened in the avenue. The white of two letters in her lap grew indistinct. One was to Harry; the other was to her father. Ernest had been her favourite but she liked Harry too. Her father was becoming old lately, she noticed; he would miss her. Sometimes he could be very

nice. Not long before, when she had been laid up for a day, he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire. Another day, when their mother was alive, they had all gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth. She remembered her father putting on her mother's bonnet to make the children laugh.

Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne. Down far in the avenue she could hear a street organ playing. She knew the air. Strange that it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could. She remembered the last night of her mother's illness; she was again in the close dark room at the other side of the hall and outside she heard a melancholy air of Italy. The organ-player had been ordered to go away and given sixpence. She remembered her father strutting back into the sickroom saying:

"Damned Italians! coming over here!"

As she mused the pitiful vision of her mother's life laid its spell on the very quick of her being--that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness. She trembled as she heard again her mother's voice saying constantly with foolish insistence:

"Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!"

She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness. Frank would take her in his arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her.

She stood among the swaying crowd in the station at the North Wall. He held her hand and she knew that he was speaking to her, saying something about the passage over and over again. The station was full of soldiers with brown baggages. Through the wide doors of the sheds she caught a glimpse of the black mass of the boat, lying in beside the quay wall, with illumined portholes. She answered nothing. She felt her cheek pale and cold and, out of a maze of distress, she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty. The boat blew a long mournful whistle into the mist. If she went, tomorrow she would be on the sea with Frank, steaming towards Buenos Ayres. Their passage had been booked. Could she still draw back after all he had done for her? Her distress awoke a nausea in her body and she kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer.

A bell clanged upon her heart. She felt him seize her hand:

"Come!"

All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her. She gripped with both hands at the iron railing.

"Come!"

No! No! No! It was impossible. Her hands clutched the iron in frenzy. Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish!

"Eveline! Evvy!"

He rushed beyond the barrier and called to her to follow. He was shouted at to go on but he still called to her. She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition.



THE THREE HUNDRED

The Project Gutenberg eBook, *Mike Flannery On Duty and Off*, by Ellis Parker Butler

There was a certain big sort of masterfulness about the president of the Interurban Express Company that came partly from his natural force of character and partly from the position he occupied as head of the company, and when he said a thing must be done he meant it. In his own limited field he was a bigger man than the President of the United States, for he was not only the chief executive of the Interurban Express Company, but he made its laws as well. He could issue general orders turning the whole operation of the road other end to as easily as a national executive could order the use of, let us say, a simplified form of spelling in a few departments of the Government. He sat in the head office of the company at Franklin and said "Let this be done," and, in every suburban town where the Interurban had offices, that thing was done, under pain of dismissal from the service of the company. Even Flannery, who was born rebellious, would scratch his red hair in the Westcoate office and grumble and then follow orders.

Old Simon Gratz came into the president's office one morning and sat

himself into a vacant chair with a grunt of disapprobation, the same grunt of disapprobation that had been like saw-filing to the nerves of the president for many years, and the president immediately prepared to contradict him, regardless of what it might be that Simon Gratz disapproved of. It happened to be the simplified spelling. He waved the morning paper at the president and wanted to know what _he_ thought of this outrageous thing of chopping off the tails of good old English words with an official carving-knife, ruining a language that had been fought and bled for at Lexington, and making it look like a dialect story, or a woman with two front teeth out.

It rather strained the president sometimes to think of a sound train of argument against Simon Gratz at a moment's notice. Sometimes he had to abandon the beliefs of a lifetime in order to take the other side of a proposition that Simon Gratz announced unexpectedly, and it was still harder to get up an enthusiasm for one side of a thing of which he had never heard, as he sometimes had to do; but he was ready to meet Simon Gratz on either side of the simplified spelling matter, for he had read about it himself in the morning paper. It had seemed a rather unimportant matter until Simon Gratz mentioned it, but now it immediately became a thing of the most intimate concern.

"What do I think?" he asked. "I think it is the grandest thing--the most sensible thing--the greatest step forward that has been taken for centuries. That is what I think. It is a revolution! That is what I think, Mr. Gratz."

He swung around in his chair and struck his desk with his fist to emphasize his words. Mr. Gratz, whose opinions were the more obnoxious because he was a stockholder of the company, sniffed. The way he had of sniffing was like a red rag to a bull, and he meant it as such. The president accepted it in the spirit in which it was meant. He said: "Bah!"

"I will tell you what it is," said Mr. Gratz, pushing his chin up at the president. "It is the most idiotic--"

[Illustration: "_I will tell you what it is," said Mr. Gratz_"]

"Don't tell me!" cried Mr. Smalley. "I don't want you to tell me anything! What do you know about the English language, anyhow? 'Gratz!' That is a pretty name for a man who pretends to have a right to say how the English language shall be spelled! Don't I know your history, Mr. Gratz? Don't I know you had your name changed from Gratzensteinburgher? And you pretend to be worried because our President and the most talented men in the country want to drop a few useless letters out of a measly three hundred words! I tell you these changes in spelling should have been made long ago. Long ago. This is the business man's age, Mr.

Gratz-and-the-rest-of-it. Yes, sir! And you, as a business man, should be proud of this concession made by our most noted scholars to the needs of the business man."

"Look at 'em!" sneered Mr. Gratz, patting the list of three hundred revised words with his finger, and shoving the newspaper under Mr. Smalley's nose. "Poor bob-tailed, one-eyed mongrels! Progress! It is anarchy--impudence--Look at this--'t-h-r-u!' What kind of a word is that? 'T-h-o!' What kind of a thing is that? What in the world is a 's-i-t-h-e,' I would like to know?"

Mr. Smalley had not been sufficiently interested in the matter of new spelling to save his morning paper. He had not even read through the list of three hundred words. But he was interested now. The new spelling had become the thing most dear to his heart, and he pulled the paper from Mr. Gratz's hand and slapped the list of words warmly.

"Progress! Yes, progress! That is the word. And economy!" he cried. "That is the true American spirit! That is what appeals to the man who is not a fossil!" This was a delicate compliment to Mr. Gratz, but Mr. Gratz was so used to receiving compliments when Mr. Smalley was talking to him that he did not blush with pleasure. He merely got red in the face. "Think of the advantage of saving one letter in every word that is written in every business office in America?" continued Mr. Smalley excitedly. "The ink saved by this company alone by dropping those letters will amount to a thousand dollars a year. And in the whole correspondence of the nation it will amount to millions! Millions of dollars, in ink alone, to say nothing of the time saved!" He got out of his chair and began to walk up and down the office, waving his arms. It helped him to get hot, and he liked to get hot when Mr. Gratz called. It was the only time he indulged himself. So he always got as hot as he could while he had the chance.

"Yes, sir!" he shouted, while Mr. Gratz sat shrunken down into his chair and watched him with a teasing smile. "And I will tell you something more. The policy of this company is to be economical. Yes, sir! And this company is going to adopt the simplified spelling! Going to adopt it right now! In spite of all the old-fogyism in the world!--Miss Merrill!"

The office-door opened, and a pompadour, followed by a demure young lady, entered the room. She slipped quietly into a chair beside the president's desk and laid her copy-book on the side of the desk and waited while her employer arranged the words in his mind. Her pencil was delicately poised above the ruled page. While she waited she hit the front of her pompadour a few improving slaps with her unengaged hand and pulled out the slack of her waist front.

"Take this," said Mr. Smalley sharply. "General Order Number (you can

supply the number, Miss Merrill). To all employees of the Interurban Express Company: On and after this date all employees of this company will use, in their correspondence and in all other official business, the following list of three hundred words. By order of the president. Read what you have there."

[Illustration: "_Her pencil was delicately poised above the ruled page_"]

Miss Merrill ran one hand around her belt--she was the kind of girl that can make her toilet and do business at the same time--and read:

"General Order Number Seven Hundred and Nineteen. To all employees of the Interurban Express Company: On and after this date all employees of this company will use, in their correspondence and in all other official business, the following list of three hundred words. By order of the president."

"Yes," said the president, tearing a strip from Mr. Gratz's newspaper that he held in his hand. "Here is the list of words. I want the whole thing mimeographed, and I want you to see that a copy gets into the hands of every man and woman in our employ: all the offices, here and on the road. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," she answered, and then she arose, fixed her neck scarf, and went out. Mr. Smalley took his seat at his desk and began arranging his papers, humming cheerfully.

Mr. Gratz arose and stalked silently out of the office. But when the door was closed behind him he smiled. One of the members of the "Simplified Spelling Board" was his personal friend. Mr. Gratz had prevailed upon Mr. Smalley to adopt the new spelling, and he had done so by using the only means he could use with hope of success.

The next day Mike Flannery, the Westcote agent of the express company, was sitting at his desk in the express office, carefully spelling out a letter to Mary O'Donnell, on whom his affections were firmly fixed, when he heard the train from Franklin whistle. He had time to read what he had written before he went to meet the train, and he glanced over the letter hastily.

"Dearst Mary Odonil," it said, "reply in to yourse i would say i ment no harm when i kised you last nite it did not mene you was no lady but my feelins got to mutch for me i love you so how was i to no you wood not like it when i had never tried it on befor if you dont like it i will let up on that after this but it was the best kiss i ever had--" He stopped to scratch out the part about its being the best kiss he had ever had, for that seemed, on second thought, not the best thing to say,

and then, as lovers so often do, he tore the whole letter to bits, and hurried to meet the train.

Flannery came back with a few packages and a couple of the long official envelopes. He dumped the packages on his counter and tore open the first of the envelopes. It was a mimeograph circular and had that benzine odor that Flannery had come to associate with trouble, for it meant a new rule that he must follow, or a change of rates that he must memorize, under penalty of dismissal. All orders were given under penalty of dismissal, and Flannery had so many rules and regulations under his red hair that each day he wondered whether he would still be the Westcote agent at the end of the next.

As he read his forehead wrinkled.

"'Gineral Order Number Sivin Hundred an' noineteen,'" he read slowly. "And is it possible 'tis only th' sivin hundred an' noineteenth of thim I have been gettin'? I w'u'd have said 't was th' forty-sivinth thousand gineral order I have had t' learn and memorize. Wheniver th' prisidint, or th' vice-prisidint, or th' manager, or th' janitor, or th' office-boy at th' head office has nawthin' else t' do they be thinkin' up a new gineral order t' sind t' Flannery. 'What's th' news of th' day?' says th' prisidint. 'Nawthin' doin',' says th' janitor. 'Then wake up and sind Flannery a gineral order t' learn th' Declaration av Independince by hearrt,' says th' prisidint. 'Mebby he do be gittin' lazy!' 'And shall I add on th' Constitution av th' United States?' says th' janitor. 'Sure!' says th' prisidint, 't will do Flannery no harm t' be busy.'"

He held the paper out at arm's length and shook his head at it, and then slapped it down on the counter and gave it his attention.

"'To all employees av th' Interurban Ixpriss Company,'" he read. "'On an' after this date all employees av this company will use, in their correspondince, and in all other official business, the follyin' list av t'ree hunderd words. By order of th' prisidint.' Sure!" he said. "'Under penalty av dismissal from th' service av th' company,' as ye might be sayin'!"

He turned to the list of three hundred words and began to read it. As he passed down the list the frown on his brow deepened. At "anapest" it was a noticeable frown, at "apothem" it became very pronounced, and at "dieresis" his shaggy red brows nearly covered his eyes, he was frowning so hard.

"I wonder what th' Interurban Ixpriss Company w'u'd loike me t' be writin' thim on th' subject av 'ecumenical'?" he said. "Mebby there be some of these here 'edile' and 'egis' things comin' by ixpriss, and 't will be a foine thing t' know how t' spell thim whin th' con-_sign_-y

puts in a claim fer damages, but if th' company is goin' t' carry many 'eponyms' and 'esophaguses' Mike Flannery will be lookin' for another job.--And w'u'd you look at this wan! 'Paleography!' Thim be nice words t' order th' agints av th' ixpriss company t' be usin'!"

He pulled at a lock of his hair thoughtfully.

"I wonder, now," he said, "do they want Mike Flannery t' learn all thim words by hearrrt, and use thim all. Should I be usin' thim all in one letter, or distribute thim throughout th' correspondince, or what? 'T is a grand lot of worrds if I only knew what anny of thim meant, but 't will be hard t' find a subject t' write on t' run in this word of 'homonym.' There has not been one of thim about th' office since Mike Flannery has been here."

But his duty was plain, and he took his varnish pot and pasted the list on the wall beside his desk where he could refer to it instantly, and then he slid on to his high stool to write the acknowledgment of the receipt of the list.

"Interurban Express Co., Franklin. Gentelmen," he wrote, "I receved the genral order 719 and will oba it but I will have to practise v. and n. awhile first, some of the words dont come natural to me off hand like polyp and estivate. what is the rate on these if any comes exprest. whats a etiology, pleas advice me am I to use all these words or only sum. Mike Flannery."

He sealed this with the feeling that he had done well indeed for a first time. He had worked in "practise v. and n." and "exprest," and, if the head office should complain that he had not used enough of the words in the list, he could point to "polyp" and "estivate" and "etiology." It was slow work, for he had to look up each word he used before writing it, to see whether it was on the list or not, but generally it was not, and that gave him full liberty to spell it in any of the three or four simplified ways he was used to employing.

Then he turned to his letter to Mary O'Donnell. His buoyancy was somewhat lessened in this second attempt by the necessity of looking up each word as he used it, and he was working his way slowly, and had just told her he was sorry he had "kist" her ("kist" was in the three hundred), and that it had been because he had "fagot" himself ("fagot" was in the list also), when a man entered the office and laid a package on the counter.

Flannery slid from his stool and went to the counter. The man was Mr. Warold of the Westcote Tag Company, and the package was a bundle of tags that he wished to send by express. They were properly done up, for Mr. Warold sent many packages by express. It was addressed to the "Phoenix

Sulphur Company, Armourville, Pa." It was marked "Collect" and "Keep Dry." It was a nice package, done up in a masterly manner, and the tags were to fill a rush order from the sulphur company.

Flannery pulled the package across the counter, and was about to drop it on the scales when the "Collect" caught his eye, and he held out his hand to Mr. Warold.

"Have ye brung th' receipt-book with ye?" he asked.

Mr. Warold felt in his coat-pocket. He had forgotten to bring the receipt book, and Flannery drew a pad of blank receipts toward himself, and dipped a pen into the ink. Then he looked at the address.

"Pho-_e_-nix," he read slowly. "That do be a queer sort av a worrd, Mr. Warold. 'Pho-_e_-nix!' Is it a man's name, I dunno?"

"Feenix," pronounced Mr. Warold, grinning.

Flannery was writing carefully with his tongue clasped firmly between his teeth, but he stopped and looked up.

"'T is an odd way t' spell a worrd av that same pronownciation," he said, and then, suddenly, he laid down his pen and turned to the list of three hundred words that was pasted beside his desk.

"Oh, ho!" he exclaimed, when he had run his finger down the list, and then he ran it still farther and said it again, and more vigorously, and turned back to Mr. Warold. He shook his head and pushed the package across to Mr. Warold.

"Tek it back home, Mr. Warold," he said, "and change th' spellin' of th' worrds on th' address av it. 'T is agin th' rules av th' ixpriss company as it is. There be no 'o' in th' feenix av th' Interurban Ixpriss Company. P-h-e-n-i-x is th' improved and official spellin' av th' worrd, and th' rules av th' company is agin lettin' any feenixes with an 'o' in thim proceed into th' official business av th' company. And th' same of that 'Sulphur' worrd. It has been improved and fixed up accordin' to ginal order number sivin hunderd and noineteen, and th' way t' spell it is 'S-u-l-f-u-r,' and no other way goes across th' counter av th' ixpriss company whilst Mike Flannery runs it. And th' ixpriss company will have none of your 'Armourville,' Mr. Warold. There be no 'u' in th' worrd as 'tis simplified by th' order av th' prisidint av th' Interurban."

Mr. Warold looked at the package and then at Flannery, and gasped. He was slow to anger, and slow in all ways, and it took him fully two minutes to let Flannery's meaning trickle into his brain. Then he pushed

the package across to Flannery again and laughed.

"That is all right," he said. "I read all about the simplified spelling in the papers, and if your company wants to adopt it, it is none of my business, but this has nothing to do with that. This is the name of a company, and the name of a town, and companies and towns have a right to spell their names as they choose. That--why, everybody knows that!"

"Sure they have th' right," admitted Flannery pleasantly, but pushing the package slowly toward Mr. Warold; "sure they have! But not in th' ixpriss office av th' Interurban. 'T is agin th' rules t' spell any feenixes with an 'o' in th' ixpriss office, or any sulphurs with a 'ph,' or any armours with a 'u.' Thim spellin's and two hunderd an' ninety-sivin more are agin th' rules, and can't go. Packages that has thim on can't go. Nawthin' that has thim in thim or on thim or about thim can't go. Ginerall order number sivin--"

"Look here," said Mr. Warold slowly. "I tell you, Flannery, that those words are the names of a company--"

"An' I tell ye," said Flannery, holding the package away from him with a firm hand, "that rules is rules, and ginerall orders is worse than rules, an' thim spellin's can't go."

Mr. Warold flushed. He put his hand opposite to Flannery's hand on the package and pushed with an equal firmness.

"I offer this package for shipment," he said with a trace of anger beginning to show in his voice. "I offer it to you just as it is; spelled as it is; and without change or anything else. This express company is a common carrier, under the Interstate Commerce Law, and it cannot refuse to take this package, spelling or no spelling. That is the law!"

"I have no quarrel with th' intercommerce state law, Mr. Warold, sir," said Flannery with dignity, "and 'tis none of my business, sir. But th' spellin' of th' English language is, for 't is my duty by ginerall order number sivin hunderd and noineteen t' spell three hundred worrds with th' proper simplification, and spell thim I will, and so will all that does business with Mike Flannery from sivin A.M. till nine P.M. Worrds that is not in th' three hunderd ye may spell as ye please, Mr. Warold, for there be no rule agin it, and in conversation or correspondince with Mike Flannery, before th' hour av sivin and after th' hour av nine, ye may spell as ye please, and I will do th' same, for thin I am off duty; but durin' th' office hours th' whole dang list from 'abridgment' t' 'wrapt' must be spelled accordin' t' orders. Yis, sir, 'polyp' and 'dactyl' and th' whole rist av thim. So tek th' package an' change th' address like a good man."

Mr. Warold glared at Flannery, and then turned to the door. He took one or two stiff strides, and then turned back. Anger was well enough as a luxury, but the Phoenix Sulphur Company had telegraphed for the tags, and business was a necessity. The tags must go out by the first train. He leaned over the counter and smiled at Flannery. Flannery glared back.

"See here, now, Flannery," he said gently, "you don't want to get into trouble with the United States Government, do you? And maybe get yourself and your president and every employee and officer of your company in jail for no one knows how long, do you? Well, then, just telegraph to your president and ask him whether he makes an exception in favour of the old spelling of names of companies, will you? That will do no harm. Tell him a package is offered, and tell him the address, and let him decide."

Flannery considered a moment and then took his telegraph pad.

"President Interurban, Franklin," he wrote, "Shall i take pakag for Phoenix Sulphur Company, Armourdale. Anser quick. Westcote."

He ran across the street with it and came back. The head office had a direct wire, and the answer came a minute after Flannery reached the waiting Mr. Warold.

"Westcote. Give fuller particulars. Name consignor. Contents. Objection to receiving. (Signed) Franklin."

Flannery showed the message to Mr. Warold, and then took up his pen again.

"President Interurban, Franklin," he wrote, "Consinor Westcote tag company, tags in it. o is in phenix and ph in sulfur and u in armordale. Westcote."

The president sitting in his private office, received the message and wrinkled his brow as he read it. Telegraphing does not always improve the legibility of a message. As the message reached the president it read:

"Consinor westcote tag company tag sis in it oisin phenix phin sulfur uin armordale."

The president reached for his pile of various code-books and looked up the strange words. He found "phoenix" in one codebook with its meaning given as "extremely ill, death imminent." "Oisin" was not given, but the word "oisanite" was, and the meaning of that the code stated to be "five hundred head prime steers." It was enough. The Interurban did not wish

to accept the transportation of five hundred extremely ill steers, whose death was imminent.

"Westcote, refuse consignment absolutely. Write particulars," he wired.

Flannery showed the telegram to Mr. Warold, who would have sworn, if swearing had been his custom, but it was not. He took the package of tags and went back to his office and did the tags up in smaller bundles and sent them by mail with a special delivery stamp on each lot, and charged the cost to the Interurban. Then he wrote a long and fervid letter to the president of the Interurban, in which he gave his opinion of the simplified spelling, and particularly of a man who would interpolate it into business by the power of his personal fiat.

And Flannery wrote too.

"President Interurban, Franklin," he wrote, "i sent warold away with his tags pakag as you say to. he is mad I gess he will try to make trubbel. i tole him we could not accept pakags adress to Phoenix Sulphur Company Armourdale and it made him mad. no falt of mine. i ast him to leve out o out of phoenix and to yous f insted of ph in sulphur and too take that u out of armourdale agreeble to generl order numbr 719 and he wont do it. no falt of mine. i got to spell rite when the rules sa so. no falt of mine. i aint makin rules i sais to him. pres of interurban is responsibel how we spel. i onnly spel as he sais too. Flannery."

The president received the two letters in the same mail. He read that of Mr. Warold first, and when he came to a threat to sue the company, he frowned. This was all new to him. There was nothing in the letter about five hundred indisposed cattle of any kind. He looked up Flannery's telegrams, but they cast no light on it. Then he opened Flannery's letter and read it. He got up and began walking up and down his office, stopping now and then to shake the fist in which he had crumpled Flannery's letter. Then he called for Miss Merrill.

She came, carrying her notebook in one hand and fixing a comb in the back of her hair with the other.

"Take this!" said the president angrily. "Flannery, Westcote--" He tramped back and forth, trying to condense all the bitterness that boiled in him into telling words.

"You are a fool!" he said at length, meaning Flannery and not Miss Merrill.

Then he thought a while. Having said that, there was not much stronger that he could say. He had reached his climax too soon.

"Scratch that out," he said, and began walking again. He looked at Flannery's letter and scowled.

Miss Merrill waited patiently. It gave her an opportunity to primp.

"Never mind, Miss Merrill," said the president finally. "I will call you later." He was wondering whether he should discharge Flannery, or issue Webster's Unabridged as General Order Number 720, or what he should do.

And Flannery went on with his letter to Mary O'Donnell, for it was a work of several days with him. A love-letter was alone enough to worry him, but, when he had to think of things to say and still keep one eye on the list of three hundred words, his thoughts got away from him before he could find whether they had to be put in simplified words or in the good old go-as-you-please English that he usually wrote.

He was sitting at the desk when a messenger from the head office came in. The messenger had been sent down to Westcote by the president, and had just been across to the tag company to fix things up with Mr. Warold. He had fixed them, and the lever he had used was a paper he held in his hand. It had mollified Mr. Warold.

As the messenger entered, Flannery looked up from his letter, and he smiled with pleasure. He was glad to see some one from the head office. He wanted information about some of the words he was ordered to use. He was puzzled about "stript." Did it mean "striped" or "stripped"? And was "tost" the kind of toast you eat or the kind you drink? And how about that funny-looking combination of letters "thru," and a dozen others?

"I'm glad t'see th' sight av ye," he said, holding out his hand, "for I do be wantin' some help on these three hunderd worrds th' prisidint has been simplifyin' down. 'T is a turrible job they be, thim three hunderd! Some av thim I never will be after learnin'. Look at this, now," he said, putting his finger on "orthopedic." "And this wan," he said, touching "esophagus." "Thim be tough wans! But it's thankful I am there be but three hunderd av thim. There w'u'd be no ind t' th' day's worrk sh'u'd th' prisidint take a notion t' reform th' whole dic-shunnery. If he was t' shorten all th' worrds in th' English language, I w'u'd have a long job av it, niver knowin' whin th' worrds was spelled right or wrong. They be a powerful increase of worrk, thim three hunderd worrds. Take this wan, now--'thoroly'--'t is a bird, that wan is! But Flannery will stick t' th' list!"

The messenger laid the paper he had been holding upon Flannery's desk.

"I will be needin' an assistant sh'u'd th' prisidint promulgate any more worrds like thim," said Flannery; "and I w'u'd recommind he be Corbett

or Sullivan or wan of th' other sluggers, for th' patrons av th' company be not all easy-goin' like Mr. Warold. But progress is th' worrd of th' day, and I stand for shorter worrds, no matter how much extry worrk they mek. Th' prisidint has a great head on him."

He opened the paper on his desk and read it.

"General Order Number Seven Hundred and Twenty:

"To all employees of the Interurban Express Company: Cancel General Order Number Seven Hundred and Nineteen. By order of the president."

"As I was sayin'," said Flannery, "th' prisidint has a great head on him."



DANSE AFRICAINE

By Langston Hughes

From *The Crisis*

http://www.archive.org/stream/crisis2324dubo/crisis2324dubo_djvu.txt

THE low beating of the tom-toms,
The low beating of the tom-toms,
Slow. . . .slow
Low. . . .slow —
Stirs your blood.
Dance!
A night-veiled girl whirls softly
Into a circle of light,
Whirls softly. . . .slowly,
Like a wisp of smoke around the fire-
And the tom-toms beat,
And the tom-toms beat,
And the low beating of the tom-toms
Stirs your blood.

END OF ANOTHER HOME-HOLIDAY

The Project Gutenberg EBook of Love Poems and Others, by D. H. Lawrence

I

When shall I see the half moon sink again
Behind the black sycamore at the end of the garden?
When will the scent of the dim, white phlox
Creep up the wall to me, and in at my open window?

Why is it, the long slow stroke of the midnight bell,
(Will it never finish the twelve?)
Falls again and again on my heart with a heavy reproach?

The moon-mist is over the village, out of the mist speaks the bell,
And all the little roofs of the village bow low, pitiful, beseeching,
resigned:
Oh, little home, what is it I have not done well?

Ah home, suddenly I love you,
As I hear the sharp clean trot of a pony down the road,
Succeeding sharp little sounds dropping into the silence,
Clear upon the long-drawn hoarseness of a train across the valley.

The light has gone out from under my mother's door.
That she should love me so,
She, so lonely, greying now,
And I leaving her,
Bent on my pursuits!

Love is the great Asker,
The sun and the rain do not ask the secret

Of the time when the grain struggles down in the dark.
The moon walks her lonely way without anguish,
Because no loved one grieves over her departure.

II

Forever, ever by my shoulder pitiful Love will linger,
Crouching as little houses crouch under the mist when I turn.
Forever, out of the mist the church lifts up her reproachful finger,
Pointing my eyes in wretched defiance where love hides her face to
mourn.

Oh but the rain creeps down to wet the grain

That struggles alone in the dark,
And asking nothing, cheerfully steals back again!
The moon sets forth o' nights
To walk the lonely, dusky heights
Serenely, with steps unswerving;
Pursued by no sigh of bereavement,
No tears of love unnerving
Her constant tread:
While ever at my side,
Frail and sad, with grey bowed head,
The beggar-woman, the yearning-eyed
Inexorable love goes lagging.

The wild young heifer, glancing distraught,
With a strange new knocking of life at her side
Runs seeking a loneliness.
The little grain draws down the earth to hide.
Nay, even the slumberous egg, as it labours under the shell,
Patiently to divide, and self-divide,
Asks to be hidden, and wishes nothing to tell.

But when I draw the scanty cloak of silence over my eyes,
Piteous Love comes peering under the hood.
Touches the clasp with trembling fingers, and tries
To put her ear to the painful sob of my blood,
While her tears soak through to my breast,
Where they burn and cauterise.

III

The moon lies back and reddens.
In the valley, a corncrake calls
Monotonously,
With a piteous, unalterable plaint, that deadens
My confident activity:
With a hoarse, insistent request that falls
Unweariedly, unweariedly,
Asking something more of me,
Yet more of me!

AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE

The Project Gutenberg EBook of Shapes of Clay, by Ambrose Bierce

Once I "dipt into the future far as human eye could see,"
And saw--it was not Sandow, nor John Sullivan, but she--
The Emancipated Woman, who was weeping as she ran
Here and there for the discovery of Expurgated Man.
But the sun of Evolution ever rose and ever set,
And that tardiest of mortals hadn't evolved yet.
Hence the tears that she cascaded, hence the sighs that tore apart
All the tendinous connections of her indurated heart.
Cried Emancipated Woman, as she wearied of the search:
"In Advancing I have left myself distinctly in the lurch!
Seeking still a worthy partner, from the land of brutes and dudes
I have penetrated rashly into manless solitudes.
Now without a mate of any kind where am I?--that's to say,
Where shall I be to-morrow?--where exert my rightful sway
And the purifying strength of my emancipated mind?
Can solitude be lifted up, vacuity refined?
Calling, calling from the shadows in the rear of my Advance--
From the Region of Unprogress in the Dark Domain of Chance--
Long I heard the Unevolvable beseeching my return
To share the degradation he's reluctant to unlearn.
But I fancy I detected--though I pray it wasn't that--
A low reverberation, like an echo in a hat.
So I've held my way regardless, evolving year by year,
Till I'm what you now behold me--or would if you were here--
A condensed Emancipation and a Purifier proud
An Independent Entity appropriately loud!
Independent? Yes, in spirit, but (O, woful, woful state!)
Doomed to premature extinction by privation of a mate--
To extinction or reversion, for Unexpurgated Man
Still awaits me in the backward if I sicken of the van.
O the horrible dilemma!--to be odiously linked
With an Undeveloped Species, or become a Type Extinct!"

As Emancipated Woman wailed her sorrow to the air,
Stalking out of desolation came a being strange and rare--
Plato's Man!--bipedal, featherless from mandible to rump,
Its wings two quillless flippers and its tail a plumeless stump.
First it scratched and then it clucked, as if in hospitable terms
It invited her to banquet on imaginary worms.
Then it strutted up before her with a lifting of the head,
And in accents of affection and of sympathy it said:
"My estate is some 'at 'umble, but I'm qualified to draw
Near the hymeneal altar and whack up my heart and claw
To Emancipated Anything as walks upon the earth;

And them things is at your service for whatever they are worth.
I'm sure to be congenial, marm, nor e'er deserve a scowl--
I'm Emancipated Rooster, I am Expurgated Fowl!"

From the future and its wonders I withdrew my gaze, and then
Wrote this wild unfestive prophecy about the Coming Hen.



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A TOUCH OF E FLAT

By JOE GIBSON

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*Warning: never let anyone point any weapon
at you; even something as harmless-looking
as a water pistol--it may be a Cooling gun!*

Most people can find something wrong with the world, and some make a practice of it, but few people ever get the chance to do something about it--and those few usually go down in history with a resounding crash.

Well, it's been rather noisy around here.

From the very beginning, it had been my intention to write this account. But I certainly hadn't intended to write it while residing under police surveillance in the Recuperating Ward of St. Luke's Memorial Hospital. Nor did I expect the interest and encouragement of the police officer who put me here. Nonetheless, Sgt. Nicolas Falasca of the Ohio State Police has been most helpful both in the many long discussions we have had and in procuring the notes and data from my laboratory for the preparation of this manuscript.

But I'm afraid there shall be a considerable lot of me in this manuscript--which, I hastily assert, is not its purpose at all. My apologies for that. Fact is, there's a considerable lot of me, as anyone can see. The term I rather prefer using is roly-poly.

For the record, however, I am duly Certified-at-Birth as one Albert Jamieson Cooling, to which has been added, by my own modest efforts, a few odd alphabetic symbols such as M.S. and Ph.D. I am currently holding down a professorship at a small, privately endowed Tech college, have some mentionable background in both nuclear physics and biochemistry, possess a choice collection of rather good jazz records, have a particular fondness for barbecued spareribs--and, of late, have become an inventor.

If I've left something out, such as horn-rimmed glasses, then, by the point of my little black beard, it must be the wardrobe of 36 sport jackets. Wives? Well, I've been tempted, but a professor's salary can't support alimony.

* * * * *

My discovery of the Cooling Effect itself came quite by accident. But twice now, that accident has almost killed me. It may be argued that this is no more than I should have expected, however, since the invention which "followed naturally" can only be called one thing.

I have invented a new weapon.

That's right--a Cooling gun.

But let it be said that because I was once a war scientist, my inventiveness must therefore tend toward weapons and I should be strongly tempted to reach for the nearest one available. The term war scientist has been used so much, and has grown so commonplace, that it has become universally accepted as the label for anyone who spent as little as six weeks in the old AEC. I was in it for six years, and I voluntarily walked out.

The official policies and inter-agency politics of that era seem of little consequence now, when we have three permanent space satellites circling the Earth and one of them is Russian. We're no longer in a weapons race; both sides have reached the Ultimate Weapon in that contest. Nobody's hiding or betraying classified secrets any more. There's all that silicon-rich basalt waiting to be cheaply processed out on the Moon, if we can only get there....

Back in '69, the official news releases were still boasting how much bigger was each new toy we rolled out of the workshop, how much

more terrible destruction it would wreak than the last one. That was hogwash dished out by our PR boys (and, on the other side, by the Reds' Propaganda Ministry) simply because people didn't know any better. Actually, our toys that made the biggest bang were the worst flops as weapons.

You don't conquer an enemy by exterminating him. A hundred million corpses are no problem--just use bulldozers and they're out of the way. But a hundred million living, breathing, freezing, starving, filthy and ragged human beings can raise one hell of an uproar. And they usually do. Some of us felt that we wouldn't need to knock off even a third of Russia's major cities. Much less, in fact.

Dr. Charles Whitney made the mistake of saying so. And they canned him. The scuttlebutt was that Doc's conscience backfired. I know better; I saw the explosion. It was his patience, not his conscience.

Anyway, I turned in my resignation two weeks later. I walked out, kept my mouth shut and settled down to a small college professorship. I mention these events now simply because I believe it was there that the development of the Cooling gun actually started.

* * * * *

I had begun to see what devastating weapons could never achieve. They had deterred warfare, at least up to that August of 1969, by their threat of utter destruction--and perhaps Whitney deserved to get canned--but they offered no guarantee for the future. And they couldn't liberate a conquered nation or protect people from a dictator's secret police.

It was time we had something better. (We did, of course, but only a small part of the AEC was in on the development of atomic rockets.) Until we did, I could sense that we were simply going through the motions.

But it all began to go places fast with that cold research we were dabbling in, last semester. In fact, it was my fault that General Atomics tossed that little problem into our Cold Lab here at Webster Tech--my own past service in the AEC, my rather unusual background combining nuclear physics and biochemistry, and the post-grad crew I've managed to accumulate under my professorial wing.

The whole deal was shoveled obligingly into my Christmas stocking and the rest of the faculty obligingly left me to play with it--providing I continued to conduct my regular classes, of course.

Perhaps it's just as well I kept my hand in, though, because that line

of research got rapidly nowhere. We found that materials which have their temperatures reduced to near-absolute zero are just plain cold. Bring them into room temperature and strange things happen sometimes that isn't just them trying to warm up. It isn't friction-loss and it isn't radiation damage and it isn't entropy.

It shows.

There's a band of radiant energy somewhere between ultrasonics and radiant heat that hits fast and goes deep, and comes out just as fast, and it gets triggered off by whatever this is that happens with near-absolute zero objects subjected to room temperature. But the whole thing is so negligible that for most practical purposes it can be ignored.

Finding _that_ out cost General Atomics thirty thousand dollars, but our kids in the Cold Lab had a ball rigging the Mad Scientist's super-disintegrator gizmo that reproduced the phenomenon.

Then, that night--it's nearly four months ago now--I was alone in the lab, just switched off the lights, about to close up and go home. And I stumbled over the corner of the thing. Scrambling up, somehow I put my foot into it. And reaching out to grasp its frame, to steady myself, my hand hit the switch. It went on and I went out.

It was still on--I thought--when I regained consciousness, spraddled out on the concrete floor. I pulled the switch open and jerked the cord out of the wall socket.

* * * * *

When I got home, there wasn't a bruise or a bump on my noggin. Nor the faintest sign of a burn anywhere on my foot or leg or even on the sole of my shoe.

That was a Tuesday night.

The next day, the lab remained closed. But that night, I went in, switched the lights on and studied the machine. It showed absolutely no sign of damage, no burned insulation, nothing. I stuck my hand into it and closed the switch. It came on with its usual quiet hum. Nothing happened.

It was almost a week before I heard that the janitor was still wondering who'd blown all the campus fuses on Tuesday night. Then I remembered that I hadn't switched the lights back on when I regained consciousness.

I had been blinded when I switched them off, had stumbled over the machine, fallen, all the rest of it. But I'd come to with night vision, naturally. I saw well enough then by the moonlight streaming in the lab windows. All the lights--the machine, too--could have been off, with the fuses blown, without my noticing it. I had assumed the machine was on because its switch was closed, had opened the switch and jerked out the cord plug.

What happened had therefore required a tremendous spurt of juice in the circuits, or else a heck of a lot less juice than we carry in our lab outlets. So I took home the prints on the rig and began making changes. Which led to more changes. Which resulted in some rather complicated mathematics to which we scientific chaps resort when the kind we teach in colleges just won't work out right. I got it: a very low power-input. And I got more.

The thing is a sort of invisible ray. It can only be emitted, or broadcast, as a narrow beam from the muzzle-coils of a very fancy-looking electronic rig. Low power is a must; more juice not only heats up the rig and smokes insulation, but it won't shoot the beam.

I tested it on the black tulips (Biochemical Research Project 187) which I got to close up by the clock, not by the Sun, last year (Project 187-A) and their blossoms closed each time the beam touched them. The purple mushrooms which fluff their tops in radioactivity showed no effects.

It works on a simple "A" battery. But there's a transistor hookup that behaves like no transistor. Its molecular structure vibrates, which it shouldn't, and emits a sharp, keening note in the vicinity of E flat. A rather bulky muffler would be required, I'm afraid, to get rid of that noise.

But the oddest thing, technically, is that invisible ray-beam. It hasn't any of the effects of electric shock. I'll not go into the electro-neurological aspects of that--nobody could understand it except, just possibly, a neurologist--but the simple fact is that this ray puts a victim to sleep instantly _and it doesn't do anything else_!

No blockages or convulsions of nerve ganglia, not even a temporary catharsis of "mild" shock! Apparently it gallops up the "white matter" of the nervous system quite harmlessly, then smacks the "gray matter"--the brain, the spinal column--a good wallop. Painlessly.

In short, the victim just flops over and snores up a half-hour or so, and then awakens as if from a short nap, though perhaps with some puzzlement. There is no injury whatsoever.

* * * * *

Naturally I wanted to find out how the Cooling Effect worked and why--though I may never learn _what_ it is. Hypnosis? Artificially induced, instantaneous sleep? (Victims can be handled without awakening.) Of course, I was curious. I'd have gone through it step by step for my own satisfaction, even if somebody else had already done it before.

Nobody had--and it wasn't easy. During the rest of the term, even through final exams, I devoted every spare moment to the Cooling Effect. Even so, it took another two months' hot sweat--the summer vacation's practically gone now--to get those final diagrams onto my drawing board.

But once I did, there it was, at least its basic circuits and components. All I needed was to juggle them around, coax them into a slim, tubular case, put a carved butt on it containing the "A" battery and give it a push-button trigger. With that data, any good bench-hand in an electrical repair shop could have done the job. I fashioned it out of plastic and odds and ends in my basement laboratory.

A glance in the telephone Red Book gave me the number of a local breeding farm and a call soon brought a pair of fat, inquisitive guinea pigs in a small, wire-screened carrying cage. Beyond the patio wall, my house sides directly on open pasturage, and beyond that, lower in the valley, the alfalfa field begins. With a brisk pacing off of a base-line and some rough, splay-thumbed triangulation, I soon determined my new weapon's effectiveness from point-blank range to a thousand yards--on guinea pigs, that is.

At nine hundred yards, it still knocked them over for the count. At a thousand yards, it had no effect whatever, so far as I could determine through field glasses. The animals gave no sign that they even noticed it. That, plus the nature of the mechanism, indicates its application is definitely limited. Whether you make it small enough to fit a lady's purse or as big as an atomic cannon, its maximum effective range will still remain 900 yards. And not just on guinea pigs.

I already knew from my own experience what it does to a man at close range. Blowing the fuses on the whole campus had been the real danger there, however. Had it been the slightest bit different, even to the position of my foot in that big machine, I should certainly have been electrocuted that night.

That was the first time it almost killed me.

* * * * *

The Cooling Effect is worthless as an anesthetic for surgery. While the sleeping guinea pigs don't awaken when I pick them up out of their cage and handle them, even pulling their legs, they do struggle. They resist, like sleeping animals, not wanting to be disturbed. Still, I pinched them and bounced them and they invariably slept through an approximate half-hour. It's shock, and it isn't. It's sleep, and it isn't.

But I certainly knew it was a weapon. A new weapon. And man alive, _what_ a weapon!

I turned the guinea pigs loose in the patio, let them scamper, then tumbled them both with a quick sweep of the beam.

* * * * *

One man in ambush could knock over a whole company of marching troops!

The guns could be mounted on tripods with a rotating mechanism that kept them sweeping the area constantly. Anyone who approached within 900 yards would go down--then wake up, climb back to their feet, and go down again every half-hour. Man or animal. The guns could be strung out to cover a whole sector, then wired to a single main switch--and one lone observer could stop an infantry advance.

But they wouldn't stop guided missiles or even mortar fire. Nor would they deflect through peepholes on a tank or pillbox. There isn't quite that much "scatter" from the beam reflecting off a hard surface. However, there is some--I fired through the wire-screen openings of the cage and had the beam glance directly off the back wall, often knocking the guinea pigs down without hitting them directly. It went through a handkerchief easily, even when folded thick. A thin glass tumbler, however, stopped it.

You could take cover from it almost anywhere--if you knew when you were going to be shot at. You could wear a light plastic armor--if the joints were sealed and you kept it hooked to about a fifty-pound air-condition unit. No problem at all if you ride a motor scooter.

It wouldn't stop an invading army, but it could certainly raise the devil with the occupation. Almost anyone could make the gun. Given the components of a pocket radio, a few pieces of copper wire, a few sticks of chewing gum and a penknife, I could whittle one out of wood or put it into a plastic toy water-pistol.

But what the Armed Forces _don't_ want right now is a new secret weapon! They have their manned satellite now, keeping its vigil over

the arsenals of Earth, their big atomic missiles ready to jump off against preset targets--but with the frightful unknown of deep space chilling their backsides.

And, too, I can imagine trying to sell those Generals on something that won't even stop a tank.

I'm afraid I forgot to shut off the kitchen monitor that night. The servos dished out the dinner menu I'd dialed before noon, then whisked it away when it got cold. I noticed it when the waste processor's stuttering hum went on a bit longer than usual.

* * * * *

I realized all too clearly what a predicament I was in.

The Armed Forces would undoubtedly suppress my invention. Their lives are nightmarish enough already--not knowing what they'll find out in space or how it will affect matters. What's more, they would suppress me! There are certain retroactive clauses in that contract I signed with the AEC which would do the job with complete legality. A nice little hideaway, then, with nothing for miles but security guards, radar traps, trip-wires and electric fences.

But that was the kindest fate I could expect. Quite a number of assorted big and small dictators might like my head blown off.

The most obvious alternative was to suppress the invention myself. To destroy all traces of my experiments and forget about it. To convince myself the world wasn't ready for it.

It's quite possible I might have--if I hadn't kept forgetting to shut off things--and if not for an unsavory little group.

There is small chance that Big Jake Claggett and his three henchmen will ever be remembered for their unwitting contribution to science and the future of mankind. In fact, their contribution can be accepted as the merest coincidence--unless you discount Big Jake's liking for foreign sports cars. But that came later.

We always have had criminals and crime, and it just happened that Claggett's gang were the big news that day. It could as easily have been some other bunch of crooks.

Anyway, when nine P.M. rolled around, my wall TV burst into its customary serenade of sound and color, timed for just enough of the opening commercial to let me settle down to watch Mr. Winkle's news commentary. It was August 23rd, 1979. At two o'clock that afternoon,

Big Jake Claggett and his gang robbed the Bellefontaine County Savings Bank and got away with \$23,000.

One of the gang clubbed the elderly bank guard senseless with the barrel of his revolver. The guard was hospitalized for a possible skull fracture. Witnesses said Big Jake cursed the gunman who struck the guard, warning him to "get hold of himself!"

That was enough for me. The world had to be given my new weapon. (I'm even more convinced of it now, after discussing it with Sgt. Falasca. Practically every professional criminal in this country would give almost anything for the Cooling gun. Then they could commit armed robbery with no risk of earning a murder rap!) I could see that both criminals and police officers would welcome it and for one simple reason.

It doesn't kill, maim or injure. Even if it should cause a tremendous increase in robberies and similar crimes, its victims wouldn't be dead. Better a hundred robberies than one man's death.

Besides, I had a notion that I could discourage its criminal use.

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First I had to prevent its suppression. Solve that problem and there wouldn't be any reason I couldn't manufacture the pistols, advertise them, and sell them exactly as any firearms company can sell .22 rifles. Except that I should probably do better to arrange for their manufacture by some established firm.

That was when I began planning to write this. There is just one condition under which no secret can be suppressed--_when it ceases to be a secret!_

It took preparation. The roughed-out diagrams and scribbled notes a man uses in research are hardly suitable for publication. Technical specifications had to be phrased in clear, understandable terms. The complete data took nearly two weeks to reach final draft. Also, it seemed best to establish the importance, and at least imply the probable consequences, of this publication.

And then, obviously, I had to find a publisher.

That one had me stumped.

Furthermore, I suspect it might still have me stumped if I did not now have the full support of the Governor and the State Police of Ohio. _These police officers want Cooling guns!_ But even back then, while

I was still the only man on Earth who knew about it, I managed to formulate a solution of sorts.

Any publisher would be scared of the thing while only he and I and the printers knew about it. He'd be risking a Federal injunction, at the very least, even to consider publishing it.

But if it were no longer a secret and simply not yet _common knowledge_, most publishers would grab it. If, for example, some manufacturing firm had already considered it and was planning to put Cooling guns into production....

Dr. Charles Whitney is currently the president and chief stockholder of the Cleveland Atomic Equipment Company, which designs and manufactures special tools and equipment for nuclear power companies, radiation labs and universities throughout the Midwest. He started the business after his dismissal from the AEC and built it up gradually over the ensuing ten years. We have some of his tools at Webster Tech.

Then, too, Whitney and I had maintained a cursory, but friendly contact through the years, so naturally I thought of him first. He had the production layout for the job; what's more, he had the guts to go through with it. All I had to do was sell him on it.

Unfortunately, by then I was scared silly. I was the furtive, sneaky little man whose invention would change the world. I contacted Dr. Whitney with a simple televisor call--but instead of suggesting a perfectly normal appointment at his office, I had to swear him to secrecy and arrange a clandestine meeting in the country! I wonder he didn't consult an almanac to see if there wasn't a full moon that night.

In fact, I wonder that he came at all. It was pouring rain.

* * * * *

At least six hours are still required to reach Indian Lake in dry weather, even allowing the Federal Freeway's 125 mph speed limit. Once through the Columbus Turnoff, you have to double back westward and northward through a hilly, rural country with twisting county roads. You must have excellent driving ability to average more than 30 mph--and it won't be much more--over that maze of roads. When they're wet, you need driving ability just to stay on them.

I'd worked late the night before, arranging my material for this meeting, and didn't arise until noon. One glance at the sky's heavy overcast told me what to expect. The weather reports confirmed it.

The world proceeded about its own business, of course, thoroughly

indifferent to a worried man eating his belated breakfast. I was so completely _alone_! If I felt any sense of foreboding, stuffing articles into my pockets, picking up the guinea pigs' case and going out to the car, I couldn't distinguish it from my feeling of gloom. Perhaps I did, since the world's affairs caught up with me quite forcibly that night.

I met the rain before I was halfway up the Freeway and had to cut speed clear down to 85.

The old hotel on Indian Lake was my natural choice for a rendezvous, since it was a gutted ruin in abandoned backwoods--though "abandoned" isn't exactly true. Local residents still fish the lake and there are a few homes around the shore area.

Strictly speaking, the region has simply changed with the times. Today, you can't get past the toll-gate onto a Federal Freeway unless you have a Federal Driver's License and your Vehicle Inspection sticker is up to date--which changed more things, I think, than nuclear power and industrial automation.

* * * * *

When people suddenly couldn't drive across the country in any junkheap with a nut at the wheel, it became a mark of distinction just to _live_ in the country. That's what made more rural jobs--the small community shopping centers springing up, products having to be shipped out to them, the growth of rural power and water systems--when work in the cities got scarce, with automation taking over the factories.

But it hit the small resort areas especially hard. More people are vacationing in the cities now than at the seashore or mountains!

I hadn't been out to the lake in years, but I had less trouble finding my way this time than ever before. The influx of new home-builders has considerably improved the road signs around there, both in number and accuracy, and that's all you need in a Porsche Apache. My little blue speedster takes those narrow, rain-slicked county roads like a Skid Row bum making the saloon circuit with a brand new ten-dollar bill. The only real problem is getting around those armor-sided Detroit mastodons that can't decide which end is the front.

Anyway, driving kept me too busy to think much of anything else. But I made good time--better than I expected--and it wasn't long after dark when my headlights cut through the sheeting rain to pick out the fire-blackened ruin of the hotel.

I jounced the little Porsche around the deep-rutted drive and parked

next to the empty frame building that had once been the restaurant and bar.

I had plenty of time to think, for Dr. Whitney didn't arrive until two hours later.

It was sometime during those two hours that the Claggett gang smashed their way through a police roadblock just outside Lima, their guns blasting reply to the machine-gun bullets peppering their big sedan. Two policemen were seriously wounded; one died on the way to the hospital.

Shortly afterward, the bullet-riddled sedan was found by the roadside, but only one of the gang was in it. He was dead.

And some time later, a call aroused Sgt. Falasca from a sound sleep. He didn't even take time to don his State Police uniform, but merely pulled a trenchcoat on over his pajamas, got his revolver out of the bureau drawer, and kissed his wife on the way out the front door. He had three other State Troopers to pick up, off-duty as he was, before proceeding to the assembly point at Lima.

The Claggett gang had split up, some of them probably wounded, each of them armed and more dangerous than ever. They were wanted for murder now.

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Dr. Whitney made the trip by helicopter, of course--the head of a scientific instrument company must keep up appearances. He'd waited as long as he could, hoping the weather might clear, then had taken off on instruments and reached the lake by ADF gridmap. He settled to the lake surface and crept in to shore, his landing lights probing the thick curtains of rain.

I heard the hollow roar of his turbine, rather than the throb of his rotor blades, and hurried around the slanting wing of the old hotel to meet him. The lakefront presented a macabre view that wrenched at my memory. The desolate, cracked-stucco walls with the black holes of their windows rising from mounds of rubble beside me, a weed-grown lawn and a straggle of trees half-masking the lake--stark-looking trees now, in the 'copter's landing lights--and a small boat-dock leaning half into the black water.

Once, as a rather obnoxious young high-school student, I had seen this lakefront on just such a night. A steady rain fell, lightning flickered, and thunder blasted its anger ... and, for a moment, I saw it as it had been, with that grand old British pioneer of space flight,

Arthur C. Clarke, standing out there in the pelting rain with his camera, taking pictures of the lightning!

Dr. Whitney brought his sleek craft over the treetops and settled neatly into the small space that remained of the lawn, his rotor tips almost nicking the crumbled walls of the hotel. It was a plexi-nosed, three-place executive ship--a Bell, I think. A lot of people prefer flying. They must fly specific air routes and airfield traffic patterns; and with airfields so crowded, they have trouble finding a place to park. It's not for me.

But Dr. Whitney had heard the newscasts on the way out. I don't recall what was said at our meeting. It was rather uncomfortable, under the circumstances--the more so for me, I think, as those circumstances were my own making. But when we'd rounded the hotel and entered the old restaurant-bar, I recall Whitney's jocular approval.

"Well, we're cozy enough here," he said. "So long as the Claggett gang doesn't drop in on us!"

That was how I heard of the night's happenings. When he saw that his remark puzzled me, he related the news while I was setting things up for our conference. We were in the back room, which had once been the bar--the front section, formerly the restaurant, had had windows all around, which now formed an unbroken gap with a chill wind whistling through it. The place was stripped bare of its former fixtures, but some unsung fisherman had provided the old barroom with a rickety table and several pressed-board boxes to sit on. I had a Coleman radiant heat lantern which I swung from a ceiling wire hook, a plastic sheet which I threw across the table, and a couple of patio chair cushions for the boxes.

It took some shifting about to get everything out of the way of several roof leaks, and I had to choose a sturdy box for myself, first testing a few.

* * * * *

I can well imagine the thoughts and emotions struggling through Dr. Whitney's mind then, but he showed none of them. It was I, rather, with my clumsy movements, the pauses to polish my glasses, the lump I kept trying to swallow, who took so long to face up to it.

But finally we were ready. I took out my notebook and opened it upon the table before me. Whitney's frosty eyebrows raised. Then he quietly reached inside his own topcoat, produced his notebook and pen, and laid the notebook open before him. It was a gesture of an almost-forgotten past, but a habit neither of us had ever abandoned. Something about

it--the reminder of countless AEC conferences we had both attended--had a steadying effect on me.

I placed my pistol in the center of the table. The guinea pigs' cage was on the floor before us. I told what I had to tell.

Then I went to the cage, removed one of the animals and tucked it into my pocket. Returning to the table, I picked up the pistol and fired at the cage. The shrill E flat note pierced the rushing sound of the rain.

Whitney rose and went to the cage. Gently removing the little creature, he felt it a moment, then nodded.

"Asleep," he said, and replaced it in the cage.

Looking over my notes, I see that considerable space would be required to cover the entire interrogation which followed. Also, I see that I failed to note down the almost gradual change in my old friend's demeanor--from his calm, quiet manner at first to the keen-eyed excitement of his flushed features, his rapid-fire questions at the end.

I shall, instead, give some examples of that discussion.

"The guinea pigs sleep for only a half-hour? Always a half-hour?"

"Yes. It never varies much. A minute or so each way."

"If you--uh--shoot one, then shoot it again, does that prolong its sleep any?"

"Not at all! Still only a half-hour, no matter how many times you shoot them while they sleep."

"Ummm. That could indicate sleep is the brain's defense mechanism against the effects of your ray. A successful defense, it would seem. They show _no_ after-effects of this?"

"None whatever. They've begun to associate it with the pistol, though. Each time I point the pistol at them, they get mad--"

"You mean angry? They aren't _afraid_ of it?"

"Certainly not afraid! One in my pocket here tries burrowing into corners, making furious grunting sounds. The other one usually just stands and glares at me."

"How about when they wake up?"

"Well, generally, their first reaction is to keep a sharp eye out for me--and the pistol."

"Wary, eh? Damned inconvenient, I suppose, getting knocked asleep all the time. But it certainly doesn't seem to hurt them. What about mental disturbance?"

"No obvious aberrations. But I don't know--"

"Yes, they're only guinea pigs. Hardly be satisfactory to the American Medical Association, among others. Take years of research to determine its absolute safety--"

"But it should be released to the public now!"

"Why?"

"Because its harmful effects, if any, are very likely to be insignificant--or we'd have no doubts about their existence."

"That assumption _could_ be dangerous."

"Yes. But there's something else, too. This new weapon will replace firearms--which certainly _do_ inflict injury, even death."

"Ah, society's application of it--" And Dr. Whitney took several minutes to digest that aspect.

I outlined my plans to him.

* * * * *

He was incredulous at first, then frankly aghast. "You expect me to _mass-produce_ that thing?"

I said I hoped he would.

He then commenced raking me over the coals in a most fitting and proper manner. Didn't I realize what I had created? My visions of it freeing peoples from police-state enslavement were all fine and good, and it might conceivably have such result; but what I had here was nothing more than _the most fiendish instrument ever inflicted upon human society_!

What did I think it might do in the hands of muggers, sex offenders, pickpockets, burglars or worse? Why, our whole civilized culture would be thrown into chaos! No person would dare ever be alone, for fear of ambush. No one could sleep without someone else standing watch! No man

could defend his own possessions, no woman could keep her chastity, unless people were around them, watching them _every moment of their lives_!

Goods could no longer be transported without heavy guard. The wealthy--who could afford it--would have to live in massive, well-guarded fortresses. The rest of us would be like the feudal serf, with nothing worth stealing and quite accustomed to having his daughters raped. _We'd be thrown back into the Dark Ages!_

I nodded agreement to everything he said.

Then I took the guinea pig from my pocket, held it squirming, and fastened a little collar about its neck. I unwound a wire from the plastic disc on the collar so Dr. Whitney could see it. He instantly recognized the tiny node on the wire as a miniature microphone.

"Remember how you determined that the other pig was asleep?" I asked. I taped the tiny node to the artery on the pig's neck, carried it over to the cage, and placed it inside. "I call this my 'Hey, Rube!'" I explained, grinning. "But imagine it as a little wrist radio transmitter, worn by everyone who requests them, tuned to the police broadcast frequency. Radio DF could pinpoint the location in seconds."

Going back to the table, I picked up the pistol. "This one's just for demonstration," I added, and fired at the cage.

As the guinea pig slumped beside its companion, the disc on its collar emitted a harsh, buzzing noise.

Whitney chuckled. "Slowed heartbeat, eh? Simple as that!"

"And better than any burglar alarm," I pointed out. "This one needn't sit still while some crook disconnects it!"

* * * * *

He pointed out, of course, that this might destroy its usefulness to people in a police-state. The dictator's police and troops could wear "Hey, Rube!" radios, too. I replied that all the people's underground fighters would need is a Cooling pistol and a saw-edged meat knife. One man could knock over a whole platoon and cut their heel-tendons in minutes. "The American Indians used to collect scalps in less time!" I said. "But a wounded man's more trouble to the enemy than a dead one. I think the heel-tendon would be easiest."

Perhaps it was a bit out of character for me. Whitney looked at me for a long moment, and blinked. Both eyes, tight.

But still he didn't think much of my plans.

His subsequent suggestions were far more rational, however, than the ones I had evolved through fear.

First, we didn't really know the Armed Forces would suppress this gun. They were completely involved in their problems of space flight and military satellites; there probably wasn't anyone left in Washington who was even looking for secret weapons now. And we just might get this gun through while they weren't looking.

He suggested, therefore, that I attempt to patent my invention. But that we should take adequate safeguards: I must handle all patent correspondence through his office. Then, if the Armed Forces clamped down, they'd come there first--and he could tip me off in time to escape. I'd have to flee the country. But at least I'd be free and we could adopt other measures for bringing out the gun.

It would be pointless now to disclose what other plans and arrangements we made. It's enough to say I agreed. The discussion then turned to further speculation of what the future might be with the Cooling gun.

Whitney was not at all convinced it would be good, but, rather, that neither we nor any group of men had the right to decide what humanity should or should not do.

He had strong doubts that it would mean the end of dictatorship. "Dictators dream world conquest, and dreams like that breed war," he said. "But they aren't the only ones to blame. You'll find people who like dictatorships!"

But the truth was that most of humanity didn't want to get involved, never realizing that that involved them more than anything else could.

It was at approximately this time, so far as I can determine, that Big Jake Claggett and one of his henchmen walked up to a service station where a Porsche speedster was getting gas. They clubbed the station attendant unconscious, hauled the driver out of the little sports car and took off in it.

Dr. Whitney left me with a problem. What could be done to keep people alert? It is this one thing that will determine the Cooling gun's effect on the world--whether as an instrument of crime or protection for the weak, the innocent.

Where people are complacent, it will be a boon to thieves and revolutionaries.

Where people are alert--

But what could keep us alert?

* * * * *

Driving back, I was preoccupied, hardly conscious of the little car's deft progress over the slick roads. It was almost with a feeling of detached interest that I saw the black skid-marks at the bottom of the hill--then, with chill shock, the dark bulk of the sedan on its side in the ditch.

I was slowing when a flashlight beam raked outward from the car, showing crumpled metal and broken headlights. One figure, perhaps two, were standing behind it. Another one, a man in a trenchcoat, mud-splattered almost to his hips, was walking onto the road in front of me, flagging me down.

"Get out of that car!"

There were exasperation and rage in his voice, an expression of utter fury on his face. He stood just at the edge of my headlights' glare, not directly in it, with his hands thrust deep in his pockets.

There was that. There was the speed of the sedan, as evidenced by its skid-marks. My mind leaped instantly to one nerve-shattering conclusion--

And I felt absolutely calm. I can't explain that. It may have been that the night's events had already drained me of tense emotion.

They're armed, I thought, _but so am I! And I have a weapon that can get them all with one sweep--_

This, while I opened the door and climbed out. While I thrust my hand into my own pocket.

I whipped out the little pistol.

One instant, he was standing still, hands thrust in the wet trenchcoat. The next, a heavy revolver exploded at his hip. A sledgehammer caught me in the right side, knocked me reeling.

It occurred to me then, lying there on the road, cold rain pelting my face, a warm wetness spreading along my side. I had met the one pitfall we shall never escape in a pistol-packing society: the man who's faster with a gun than you are!

Bending over me, Sgt. Nicolas Falasca picked up the little plastic Cooling gun and straightened up, peering at it, scowling. "What the hell!" he muttered.

I was rather inclined to agree.

* * * * *

Naturally, this had to be told. The State of Ohio wants Cooling guns for its police officers; after this, other States will undoubtedly follow suit. The Armed Forces don't want to suppress it. And Dr. Whitney will start production in just another week.

They've been very decent about paying my hospital bills and seeing that nothing else happens to me.

Even though Sgt. Falasca was saddled with the latter responsibility, I must repeat that he's treated me very well. The future will depend a lot on men like him.

As for the rest--I've been assured that the guinea pigs were honorably retired to the breeding farm; Nurse wouldn't let me keep them here. Everyone knows of the violent end of the Claggett gang.

I want to state vigorously at this point that, despite widespread public belief, neither I nor the Cooling gun had anything whatsoever to do with it. I never at any time even saw Claggett or any member of his gang. Their unwitting contribution was the alerting of Sgt. Falasca and the rest of the police, and, as I mentioned at the beginning of this account, Claggett's stealing a Porsche like mine because he was fond of sports cars.

That's the whole of the story, except for one additional item:

This is scheduled to appear at the same time as the plans and specifications for the Cooling gun. You'll find them given as premiums with safety razors, breakfast cereals, cigarettes and other articles. I wish to thank the manufacturers for their kind cooperation.



A CHRISTMAS SPECTACLE

The Project Gutenberg EBook of Love Conquers All, by Robert C. Benchley

For Use in Christmas Eve Entertainments in the Vestry

At the opening of the entertainment the Superintendent will step into the footlights, recover his balance apologetically, and say:

"Boys and girls of the Intermediate Department, parents and friends: I suppose you all know why we are here tonight. (At this point the audience will titter apprehensively). Mrs. Drury and her class of little girls have been working very hard to make this entertainment a success, and I am sure that everyone here to-night is going to have what I overheard one of my boys the other day calling 'some good time.' (Indulgent laughter from the little boys). And may I add before the curtain goes up that immediately after the entertainment we want you all to file out into the Christian Endeavor room, where there will be a Christmas tree, 'with all the fixin's,' as the boys say." (Shrill whistling from the little boys and immoderate applause from everyone).

There will then be a wait of twenty-five minutes, while sounds of hammering and dropping may be heard from behind the curtains. The Boys' Club orchestra will render the "Poet and Peasant Overture" four times in succession, each time differently.

At last one side of the curtains will be drawn back; the other will catch on something and have to be released by hand; someone will whisper loudly, "Put out the lights," following which the entire house will be plunged into darkness. Amid catcalls from the little boys, the footlights will at last go on, disclosing:

The windows in the rear of the vestry rather ineffectively concealed by a group of small fir trees on standards, one of which has already fallen over, leaving exposed a corner of the map of Palestine and the list of gold-star classes for November. In the center of the stage is a larger tree, undecorated, while at the extreme left, invisible to everyone in the audience except those sitting at the extreme right, is an imitation fireplace, leaning against the wall.

Twenty-five seconds too early little Flora Rochester will prance out from the wings, uttering the first shrill notes of a song, and will have to be grabbed by eager hands and pulled back. Twenty-four seconds later the piano will begin "The Return of the Reindeer" with a powerful accent on the first note of each bar, and Flora Rochester, Lillian McNulty, Gertrude Hamingham and Martha Wrist will swirl on, dressed in white, and advance heavily into the footlights, which will go out.

There will then be an interlude while Mr. Neff, the sexton, adjusts the connection, during which the four little girls stand undecided whether to brave it out or cry. As a compromise they giggle and are herded back into the wings by Mrs. Drury, amid applause. When the lights go on again, the applause becomes deafening, and as Mr. Neff walks triumphantly away, the little boys in the audience will whistle: "There she goes, there she goes, all dressed up in her Sunday clothes!"

"The Return of the Reindeer" will be started again and the show-girls will reappear, this time more gingerly and somewhat dispirited. They will, however, sing the following, to the music of the "Ballet Pizzicato" from "Sylvia":

"We greet you, we greet you,
On this Christmas Eve so fine.
We greet you, we greet you,
And wish you a good time."

They will then turn toward the tree and Flora Rochester will advance, hanging a silver star on one of the branches, meanwhile reciting a verse, the only distinguishable words of which are: "_I am Faith so strong and pure_--"

At the conclusion of her recitation, the star will fall off.

Lillian McNulty will then step forward and hang her star on a branch, reading her lines in clear tones:

"_And I am Hope, a virtue great,
My gift to Christmas now I make,
That children and grown-ups may hope today
That tomorrow will be a merry Christmas Day_."

The hanging of the third star will be consummated by Gertrude Hamingham, who will get as far as "_Sweet Charity I bring to place upon the tree_--" at which point the strain will become too great and she will forget the remainder. After several frantic glances toward the wings, from which Mrs. Drury is sending out whispered messages to the effect that the next line begins, "_My message bright_--" Gertrude will disappear, crying softly.

[Illustration: "'Round and 'round the tree I go."]

After the morale of the cast has been in some measure restored by the pianist, who, with great presence of mind, plays a few bars of "Will There Be Any Stars In My Crown?" to cover up Gertrude's exit, Martha Wrist will unleash a rope of silver tinsel from the foot of the tree, and, stringing it over the boughs as she skips around in a circle, will

say, with great assurance:

"_Round and 'round the tree I go,
Through the holly and the snow
Bringing love and Christmas cheer
Through the happy year to come._"

At this point there will be a great commotion and jangling of sleigh-bells off-stage, and Mr. Creamer, rather poorly disguised as Santa Claus, will emerge from the opening in the imitation fire-place. A great popular demonstration for Mr. Creamer will follow. He will then advance to the footlights, and, rubbing his pillow and ducking his knees to denote joviality, will say thickly through his false beard:

"Well, well, well, what have we here? A lot of bad little boys and girls who aren't going to get any Christmas presents this year? (Nervous laughter from the little boys and girls). Let me see, let me see! I have a note here from Dr. Whidden. Let's see what it says. (Reads from a paper on which there is obviously nothing written). 'If you and the young people of the Intermediate Department will come into the Christian Endeavor room, I think we may have a little surprise for you ...' Well, well, well! What do you suppose it can be? (Cries of "I know, I know!" from sophisticated ones in the audience). Maybe it is a bottle of castor-oil! (Raucous jeers from the little boys and elaborately simulated disgust on the part of the little girls.) Well, anyway, suppose we go out and see? Now if Miss Liftnagle will oblige us with a little march on the piano, we will all form in single file--"

At this point there will ensue a stampede toward the Christian Endeavor room, in which chairs will be broken, decorations demolished, and the protesting Mr. Creamer badly hurt.

This will bring to a close the first part of the entertainment.



THE LOST SPECIAL

The Project Gutenberg eBook, *Round the Fire Stories*, by Arthur Conan Doyle

The confession of Herbert de Lernac, now lying under sentence of death at Marseilles, has thrown a light upon one of the most inexplicable crimes of the century—an incident which is, I believe, absolutely unprecedented in the criminal annals of any country. Although there is a

reluctance to discuss the matter in official circles, and little information has been given to the Press, there are still indications that the statement of this arch-criminal is corroborated by the facts, and that we have at last found a solution for a most astounding business. As the matter is eight years old, and as its importance was somewhat obscured by a political crisis which was engaging the public attention at the time, it may be as well to state the facts as far as we have been able to ascertain them. They are collated from the Liverpool papers of that date, from the proceedings at the inquest upon John Slater, the engine-driver, and from the records of the London and West Coast Railway Company, which have been courteously put at my disposal. Briefly, they are as follows.

On the 3rd of June, 1890, a gentleman, who gave his name as Monsieur Louis Caratal, desired an interview with Mr. James Bland, the superintendent of the London and West Coast Central Station in Liverpool. He was a small man, middle-aged and dark, with a stoop which was so marked that it suggested some deformity of the spine. He was accompanied by a friend, a man of imposing physique, whose deferential manner and constant attention showed that his position was one of dependence. This friend or companion, whose name did not transpire, was certainly a foreigner, and probably, from his swarthy complexion, either a Spaniard or a South American. One peculiarity was observed in him. He carried in his left hand a small black leather dispatch-box, and it was noticed by a sharp-eyed clerk in the Central office that this box was fastened to his wrist by a strap. No importance was attached to the fact at the time, but subsequent events endowed it with some significance. Monsieur Caratal was shown up to Mr. Bland's office, while his companion remained outside.

Monsieur Caratal's business was quickly dispatched. He had arrived that afternoon from Central America. Affairs of the utmost importance demanded that he should be in Paris without the loss of an unnecessary hour. He had missed the London express. A special must be provided. Money was of no importance. Time was everything. If the company would speed him on his way, they might make their own terms.

Mr. Bland struck the electric bell, summoned Mr. Potter Hood, the traffic manager, and had the matter arranged in five minutes. The train would start in three-quarters of an hour. It would take that time to insure that the line should be clear. The powerful engine called Rochdale (No. 247 on the company's register) was attached to two carriages, with a guard's van behind. The first carriage was solely for the purpose of decreasing the inconvenience arising from the oscillation. The second was divided, as usual, into four compartments, a first-class, a first-class smoking, a second-class, and a second-class smoking. The first compartment, which was nearest to the engine, was the one allotted to the travellers. The other three were empty. The guard of

the special train was James McPherson, who had been some years in the service of the company. The stoker, William Smith, was a new hand.

Monsieur Caratal, upon leaving the superintendent's office, rejoined his companion, and both of them manifested extreme impatience to be off. Having paid the money asked, which amounted to fifty pounds five shillings, at the usual special rate of five shillings a mile, they demanded to be shown the carriage, and at once took their seats in it, although they were assured that the better part of an hour must elapse before the line could be cleared. In the meantime a singular coincidence had occurred in the office which Monsieur Caratal had just quitted.

A request for a special is not a very uncommon circumstance in a rich commercial centre, but that two should be required upon the same afternoon was most unusual. It so happened, however, that Mr. Bland had hardly dismissed the first traveller before a second entered with a similar request. This was a Mr. Horace Moore, a gentlemanly man of military appearance, who alleged that the sudden serious illness of his wife in London made it absolutely imperative that he should not lose an instant in starting upon the journey. His distress and anxiety were so evident that Mr. Bland did all that was possible to meet his wishes. A second special was out of the question, as the ordinary local service was already somewhat deranged by the first. There was the alternative, however, that Mr. Moore should share the expense of Monsieur Caratal's train, and should travel in the other empty first-class compartment, if Monsieur Caratal objected to having him in the one which he occupied. It was difficult to see any objection to such an arrangement, and yet Monsieur Caratal, upon the suggestion being made to him by Mr. Potter Hood, absolutely refused to consider it for an instant. The train was his, he said, and he would insist upon the exclusive use of it. All argument failed to overcome his ungracious objections, and finally the plan had to be abandoned. Mr. Horace Moore left the station in great distress, after learning that his only course was to take the ordinary slow train which leaves Liverpool at six o'clock. At four thirty-one exactly by the station clock the special train, containing the crippled Monsieur Caratal and his gigantic companion, steamed out of the Liverpool station. The line was at that time clear, and there should have been no stoppage before Manchester.

The trains of the London and West Coast Railway run over the lines of another company as far as this town, which should have been reached by the special rather before six o'clock. At a quarter after six considerable surprise and some consternation were caused amongst the officials at Liverpool by the receipt of a telegram from Manchester to say that it had not yet arrived. An inquiry directed to St. Helens, which is a third of the way between the two cities, elicited the following reply:—

"To James Bland, Superintendent, Central L. & W. C., Liverpool.—Special passed here at 4.52, well up to time.—Dowser, St. Helens."

This telegram was received at 6.40. At 6.50 a second message was received from Manchester:—

"No sign of special as advised by you."

And then ten minutes later a third, more bewildering:—

"Presume some mistake as to proposed running of special. Local train from St. Helens timed to follow it has just arrived and has seen nothing of it. Kindly wire advices.—Manchester."

The matter was assuming a most amazing aspect, although in some respects the last telegram was a relief to the authorities at Liverpool. If an accident had occurred to the special, it seemed hardly possible that the local train could have passed down the same line without observing it. And yet, what was the alternative? Where could the train be? Had it possibly been side-tracked for some reason in order to allow the slower train to go past? Such an explanation was possible if some small repair had to be effected. A telegram was dispatched to each of the stations between St. Helens and Manchester, and the superintendent and traffic manager waited in the utmost suspense at the instrument for the series of replies which would enable them to say for certain what had become of the missing train. The answers came back in the order of questions, which was the order of the stations beginning at the St. Helens end:—

"Special passed here five o'clock.—Collins Green."

"Special passed here six past five.—Earlestown."

"Special passed here 5.10.—Newton."

"Special passed here 5.20.—Kenyon Junction."

"No special train has passed here.—Barton Moss."

The two officials stared at each other in amazement.

"This is unique in my thirty years of experience," said Mr. Bland.

"Absolutely unprecedented and inexplicable, sir. The special has gone wrong between Kenyon Junction and Barton Moss."

"And yet there is no siding, so far as my memory serves me, between the two stations. The special must have run off the metals."

“But how could the four-fifty parliamentary pass over the same line without observing it?”

“There’s no alternative, Mr. Hood. It must be so. Possibly the local train may have observed something which may throw some light upon the matter. We will wire to Manchester for more information, and to Kenyon Junction with instructions that the line be examined instantly as far as Barton Moss.”

The answer from Manchester came within a few minutes.

“No news of missing special. Driver and guard of slow train positive no accident between Kenyon Junction and Barton Moss. Line quite clear, and no sign of anything unusual.—Manchester.”

“That driver and guard will have to go,” said Mr. Bland, grimly. “There has been a wreck and they have missed it. The special has obviously run off the metals without disturbing the line—how it could have done so passes my comprehension—but so it must be, and we shall have a wire from Kenyon or Barton Moss presently to say that they have found her at the bottom of an embankment.”

But Mr. Bland’s prophecy was not destined to be fulfilled. Half an hour passed, and then there arrived the following message from the station-master of Kenyon Junction:—

“There are no traces of the missing special. It is quite certain that she passed here, and that she did not arrive at Barton Moss. We have detached engine from goods train, and I have myself ridden down the line, but all is clear, and there is no sign of any accident.”

Mr. Bland tore his hair in his perplexity.

“This is rank lunacy, Hood!” he cried. “Does a train vanish into thin air in England in broad daylight? The thing is preposterous. An engine, a tender, two carriages, a van, five human beings—and all lost on a straight line of railway! Unless we get something positive within the next hour I’ll take Inspector Collins, and go down myself.”

And then at last something positive did occur. It took the shape of another telegram from Kenyon Junction.

“Regret to report that the dead body of John Slater, driver of the special train, has just been found among the gorse bushes at a point two and a quarter miles from the Junction. Had fallen from his engine, pitched down the embankment, and rolled among bushes. Injuries to his head, from the fall, appear to be cause of death. Ground has now been carefully examined, and there is no trace of the missing train.”

The country was, as has already been stated, in the throes of a political crisis, and the attention of the public was further distracted by the important and sensational developments in Paris, where a huge scandal threatened to destroy the Government and to wreck the reputations of many of the leading men in France. The papers were full of these events, and the singular disappearance of the special train attracted less attention than would have been the case in more peaceful times. The grotesque nature of the event helped to detract from its importance, for the papers were disinclined to believe the facts as reported to them. More than one of the London journals treated the matter as an ingenious hoax, until the coroner's inquest upon the unfortunate driver (an inquest which elicited nothing of importance) convinced them of the tragedy of the incident.

Mr. Bland, accompanied by Inspector Collins, the senior detective officer in the service of the company, went down to Kenyon Junction the same evening, and their research lasted throughout the following day, but was attended with purely negative results. Not only was no trace found of the missing train, but no conjecture could be put forward which could possibly explain the facts. At the same time, Inspector Collins's official report (which lies before me as I write) served to show that the possibilities were more numerous than might have been expected.

"In the stretch of railway between these two points," said he, "the country is dotted with ironworks and collieries. Of these, some are being worked and some have been abandoned. There are no fewer than twelve which have small gauge lines which run trolly-cars down to the main line. These can, of course, be disregarded. Besides these, however, there are seven which have or have had, proper lines running down and connecting with points to the main line, so as to convey their produce from the mouth of the mine to the great centres of distribution. In every case these lines are only a few miles in length. Out of the seven, four belong to collieries which are worked out, or at least to shafts which are no longer used. These are the Redgauntlet, Hero, Slough of Despond, and Heartsease mines, the latter having ten years ago been one of the principal mines in Lancashire. These four side lines may be eliminated from our inquiry, for, to prevent possible accidents, the rails nearest to the main line have been taken up, and there is no longer any connection. There remain three other side lines leading—

(_a_) To the Carnstock Iron Works;

(_b_) To the Big Ben Colliery;

(_c_) To the Perseverance Colliery.

"Of these the Big Ben line is not more than a quarter of a mile long,

and ends at a dead wall of coal waiting removal from the mouth of the mine. Nothing had been seen or heard there of any special. The Carnstock Iron Works line was blocked all day upon the 3rd of June by sixteen truckloads of hematite. It is a single line, and nothing could have passed. As to the Perseverance line, it is a large double line, which does a considerable traffic, for the output of the mine is very large. On the 3rd of June this traffic proceeded as usual; hundreds of men, including a gang of railway platelayers, were working along the two miles and a quarter which constitute the total length of the line, and it is inconceivable that an unexpected train could have come down there without attracting universal attention. It may be remarked in conclusion that this branch line is nearer to St. Helens than the point at which the engine-driver was discovered, so that we have every reason to believe that the train was past that point before misfortune overtook her.

“As to John Slater, there is no clue to be gathered from his appearance or injuries. We can only say that, so far as we can see, he met his end by falling off his engine, though why he fell, or what became of the engine after his fall, is a question upon which I do not feel qualified to offer an opinion.” In conclusion, the inspector offered his resignation to the Board, being much nettled by an accusation of incompetence in the London papers.

A month elapsed, during which both the police and the company prosecuted their inquiries without the slightest success. A reward was offered and a pardon promised in case of crime, but they were both unclaimed. Every day the public opened their papers with the conviction that so grotesque a mystery would at last be solved, but week after week passed by, and a solution remained as far off as ever. In broad daylight, upon a June afternoon in the most thickly inhabited portion of England, a train with its occupants had disappeared as completely as if some master of subtle chemistry had volatilized it into gas. Indeed, among the various conjectures which were put forward in the public Press there were some which seriously asserted that supernatural, or, at least, preternatural, agencies had been at work, and that the deformed Monsieur Caratal was probably a person who was better known under a less polite name. Others fixed upon his swarthy companion as being the author of the mischief, but what it was exactly which he had done could never be clearly formulated in words.

Amongst the many suggestions put forward by various newspapers or private individuals, there were one or two which were feasible enough to attract the attention of the public. One which appeared in the *Times*, over the signature of an amateur reasoner of some celebrity at that date, attempted to deal with the matter in a critical and semi-scientific manner. An extract must suffice, although the curious can see the whole letter in the issue of the 3rd of July.

"It is one of the elementary principles of practical reasoning," he remarked, "that when the impossible has been eliminated the residuum, _however improbable_, must contain the truth. It is certain that the train left Kenyon Junction. It is certain that it did not reach Barton Moss. It is in the highest degree unlikely, but still possible, that it may have taken one of the seven available side lines. It is obviously impossible for a train to run where there are no rails, and, therefore, we may reduce our improbables to the three open lines, namely, the Carnstock Iron Works, the Big Ben, and the Perseverance. Is there a secret society of colliers, an English _camorra_, which is capable of destroying both train and passengers? It is improbable, but it is not impossible. I confess that I am unable to suggest any other solution. I should certainly advise the company to direct all their energies towards the observation of those three lines, and of the workmen at the end of them. A careful supervision of the pawnbrokers' shops of the district might possibly bring some suggestive facts to light."

The suggestion coming from a recognized authority upon such matters created considerable interest, and a fierce opposition from those who considered such a statement to be a preposterous libel upon an honest and deserving set of men. The only answer to this criticism was a challenge to the objectors to lay any more feasible explanation before the public. In reply to this two others were forthcoming (_Times_, July 7th and 9th). The first suggested that the train might have run off the metals and be lying submerged in the Lancashire and Staffordshire Canal, which runs parallel to the railway for some hundreds of yards. This suggestion was thrown out of court by the published depth of the canal, which was entirely insufficient to conceal so large an object. The second correspondent wrote calling attention to the bag which appeared to be the sole luggage which the travellers had brought with them, and suggesting that some novel explosive of immense and pulverizing power might have been concealed in it. The obvious absurdity, however, of supposing that the whole train might be blown to dust while the metals remained uninjured reduced any such explanation to a farce. The investigation had drifted into this hopeless position when a new and most unexpected incident occurred.

This was nothing less than the receipt by Mrs. McPherson of a letter from her husband, James McPherson, who had been the guard of the missing train. The letter, which was dated July 5th, 1890, was posted from New York, and came to hand upon July 14th. Some doubts were expressed as to its genuine character, but Mrs. McPherson was positive as to the writing, and the fact that it contained a remittance of a hundred dollars in five-dollar notes was enough in itself to discount the idea of a hoax. No address was given in the letter, which ran in this way:—

"MY DEAR WIFE,—

"I have been thinking a great deal, and I find it very hard to give you up. The same with Lizzie. I try to fight against it, but it will always come back to me. I send you some money which will change into twenty English pounds. This should be enough to bring both Lizzie and you across the Atlantic, and you will find the Hamburg boats which stop at Southampton very good boats, and cheaper than Liverpool. If you could come here and stop at the Johnston House I would try and send you word how to meet, but things are very difficult with me at present, and I am not very happy, finding it hard to give you both up. So no more at present, from your loving husband,

"JAMES MCPHERSON."

For a time it was confidently anticipated that this letter would lead to the clearing up of the whole matter, the more so as it was ascertained that a passenger who bore a close resemblance to the missing guard had travelled from Southampton under the name of Summers in the Hamburg and New York liner *_Vistula_*, which started upon the 7th of June. Mrs. McPherson and her sister Lizzie Dolton went across to New York as directed, and stayed for three weeks at the Johnston House, without hearing anything from the missing man. It is probable that some injudicious comments in the Press may have warned him that the police were using them as a bait. However this may be, it is certain that he neither wrote nor came, and the women were eventually compelled to return to Liverpool.

And so the matter stood, and has continued to stand up to the present year of 1898. Incredible as it may seem, nothing has transpired during these eight years which has shed the least light upon the extraordinary disappearance of the special train which contained Monsieur Caratal and his companion. Careful inquiries into the antecedents of the two travellers have only established the fact that Monsieur Caratal was well known as a financier and political agent in Central America, and that during his voyage to Europe he had betrayed extraordinary anxiety to reach Paris. His companion, whose name was entered upon the passenger lists as Eduardo Gomez, was a man whose record was a violent one, and whose reputation was that of a bravo and a bully. There was evidence to show, however, that he was honestly devoted to the interests of Monsieur Caratal, and that the latter, being a man of puny physique, employed the other as a guard and protector. It may be added that no information came from Paris as to what the objects of Monsieur Caratal's hurried journey may have been. This comprises all the facts of the case up to the publication in the Marseilles papers of the recent confession of Herbert de Lernac, now under sentence of death for the murder of a merchant named Bonvalot. This statement may be literally translated as follows:—

“It is not out of mere pride or boasting that I give this information, for, if that were my object, I could tell a dozen actions of mine which are quite as splendid; but I do it in order that certain gentlemen in Paris may understand that I, who am able here to tell about the fate of Monsieur Caratal, can also tell in whose interest and at whose request the deed was done, unless the reprieve which I am awaiting comes to me very quickly. Take warning, messieurs, before it is too late! You know Herbert de Lernac, and you are aware that his deeds are as ready as his words. Hasten then, or you are lost!

“At present I shall mention no names—if you only heard the names, what would you not think!—but I shall merely tell you how cleverly I did it. I was true to my employers then, and no doubt they will be true to me now. I hope so, and until I am convinced that they have betrayed me, these names, which would convulse Europe, shall not be divulged. But on that day ... well, I say no more!

“In a word, then, there was a famous trial in Paris, in the year 1890, in connection with a monstrous scandal in politics and finance. How monstrous that scandal was can never be known save by such confidential agents as myself. The honour and careers of many of the chief men in France were at stake. You have seen a group of nine-pins standing, all so rigid, and prim, and unbending. Then there comes the ball from far away and pop, pop, pop—there are your nine-pins on the floor. Well, imagine some of the greatest men in France as these nine-pins, and then this Monsieur Caratal was the ball which could be seen coming from far away. If he arrived, then it was pop, pop, pop for all of them. It was determined that he should not arrive.

“I do not accuse them all of being conscious of what was to happen. There were, as I have said, great financial as well as political interests at stake, and a syndicate was formed to manage the business. Some subscribed to the syndicate who hardly understood what were its objects. But others understood very well, and they can rely upon it that I have not forgotten their names. They had ample warning that Monsieur Caratal was coming long before he left South America, and they knew that the evidence which he held would certainly mean ruin to all of them. The syndicate had the command of an unlimited amount of money—absolutely unlimited, you understand. They looked round for an agent who was capable of wielding this gigantic power. The man chosen must be inventive, resolute, adaptive—a man in a million. They chose Herbert de Lernac, and I admit that they were right.

“My duties were to choose my subordinates, to use freely the power which money gives, and to make certain that Monsieur Caratal should never arrive in Paris. With characteristic energy I set about my commission within an hour of receiving my instructions, and the steps which I took were the very best for the purpose which could possibly be devised.

“A man whom I could trust was dispatched instantly to South America to travel home with Monsieur Caratal. Had he arrived in time the ship would never have reached Liverpool; but, alas! it had already started before my agent could reach it. I fitted out a small armed brig to intercept it, but again I was unfortunate. Like all great organizers I was, however, prepared for failure, and had a series of alternatives prepared, one or the other of which must succeed. You must not underrate the difficulties of my undertaking, or imagine that a mere commonplace assassination would meet the case. We must destroy not only Monsieur Caratal, but Monsieur Caratal’s documents, and Monsieur Caratal’s companions also, if we had reason to believe that he had communicated his secrets to them. And you must remember that they were on the alert, and keenly suspicious of any such attempt. It was a task which was in every way worthy of me, for I am always most masterful where another would be appalled.

“I was all ready for Monsieur Caratal’s reception in Liverpool, and I was the more eager because I had reason to believe that he had made arrangements by which he would have a considerable guard from the moment that he arrived in London. Anything which was to be done must be done between the moment of his setting foot upon the Liverpool quay and that of his arrival at the London and West Coast terminus in London. We prepared six plans, each more elaborate than the last; which plan would be used would depend upon his own movements. Do what he would, we were ready for him. If he had stayed in Liverpool, we were ready. If he took an ordinary train, an express, or a special, all was ready. Everything had been foreseen and provided for.

“You may imagine that I could not do all this myself. What could I know of the English railway lines? But money can procure willing agents all the world over, and I soon had one of the acutest brains in England to assist me. I will mention no names, but it would be unjust to claim all the credit for myself. My English ally was worthy of such an alliance. He knew the London and West Coast line thoroughly, and he had the command of a band of workers who were trustworthy and intelligent. The idea was his, and my own judgment was only required in the details. We bought over several officials, amongst whom the most important was James McPherson, whom we had ascertained to be the guard most likely to be employed upon a special train. Smith, the stoker, was also in our employ. John Slater, the engine-driver, had been approached, but had been found to be obstinate and dangerous, so we desisted. We had no certainty that Monsieur Caratal would take a special, but we thought it very probable, for it was of the utmost importance to him that he should reach Paris without delay. It was for this contingency, therefore, that we made special preparations—preparations which were complete down to the last detail long before his steamer had sighted the shores of England. You will be amused to learn that there was one of my agents in

the pilot-boat which brought that steamer to its moorings.

“The moment that Caratal arrived in Liverpool we knew that he suspected danger and was on his guard. He had brought with him as an escort a dangerous fellow, named Gomez, a man who carried weapons, and was prepared to use them. This fellow carried Caratal’s confidential papers for him, and was ready to protect either them or his master. The probability was that Caratal had taken him into his counsels, and that to remove Caratal without removing Gomez would be a mere waste of energy. It was necessary that they should be involved in a common fate, and our plans to that end were much facilitated by their request for a special train. On that special train you will understand that two out of the three servants of the company were really in our employ, at a price which would make them independent for a lifetime. I do not go so far as to say that the English are more honest than any other nation, but I have found them more expensive to buy.

“I have already spoken of my English agent—who is a man with a considerable future before him, unless some complaint of the throat carries him off before his time. He had charge of all arrangements at Liverpool, whilst I was stationed at the inn at Kenyon, where I awaited a cipher signal to act. When the special was arranged for, my agent instantly telegraphed to me and warned me how soon I should have everything ready. He himself under the name of Horace Moore applied immediately for a special also, in the hope that he would be sent down with Monsieur Caratal, which might under certain circumstances have been helpful to us. If, for example, our great _coup_ had failed, it would then have become the duty of my agent to have shot them both and destroyed their papers. Caratal was on his guard, however, and refused to admit any other traveller. My agent then left the station, returned by another entrance, entered the guard’s van on the side farthest from the platform, and travelled down with McPherson the guard.

“In the meantime you will be interested to know what my movements were. Everything had been prepared for days before, and only the finishing touches were needed. The side line which we had chosen had once joined the main line, but it had been disconnected. We had only to replace a few rails to connect it once more. These rails had been laid down as far as could be done without danger of attracting attention, and now it was merely a case of completing a juncture with the line, and arranging the points as they had been before. The sleepers had never been removed, and the rails, fish-plates, and rivets were all ready, for we had taken them from a siding on the abandoned portion of the line. With my small but competent band of workers, we had everything ready long before the special arrived. When it did arrive, it ran off upon the small side line so easily that the jolting of the points appears to have been entirely unnoticed by the two travellers.

“Our plan had been that Smith the stoker should chloroform John Slater the driver, so that he should vanish with the others. In this respect, and in this respect only, our plans miscarried—I except the criminal folly of McPherson in writing home to his wife. Our stoker did his business so clumsily that Slater in his struggles fell off the engine, and though fortune was with us so far that he broke his neck in the fall, still he remained as a blot upon that which would otherwise have been one of those complete masterpieces which are only to be contemplated in silent admiration. The criminal expert will find in John Slater the one flaw in all our admirable combinations. A man who has had as many triumphs as I can afford to be frank, and I therefore lay my finger upon John Slater, and I proclaim him to be a flaw.

“But now I have got our special train upon the small line two kilomètres, or rather more than one mile, in length, which leads, or rather used to lead, to the abandoned Heartsease mine, once one of the largest coal mines in England. You will ask how it is that no one saw the train upon this unused line. I answer that along its entire length it runs through a deep cutting, and that, unless some one had been on the edge of that cutting, he could not have seen it. There was some one on the edge of that cutting. I was there. And now I will tell you what I saw.

“My assistant had remained at the points in order that he might superintend the switching off of the train. He had four armed men with him, so that if the train ran off the line—we thought it probable, because the points were very rusty—we might still have resources to fall back upon. Having once seen it safely on the side line, he handed over the responsibility to me. I was waiting at a point which overlooks the mouth of the mine, and I was also armed, as were my two companions. Come what might, you see, I was always ready.

“The moment that the train was fairly on the side line, Smith, the stoker, slowed-down the engine, and then, having turned it on to the fullest speed again, he and McPherson, with my English lieutenant, sprang off before it was too late. It may be that it was this slowing-down which first attracted the attention of the travellers, but the train was running at full speed again before their heads appeared at the open window. It makes me smile to think how bewildered they must have been. Picture to yourself your own feelings if, on looking out of your luxurious carriage, you suddenly perceived that the lines upon which you ran were rusted and corroded, red and yellow with disuse and decay! What a catch must have come in their breath as in a second it flashed upon them that it was not Manchester but Death which was waiting for them at the end of that sinister line. But the train was running with frantic speed, rolling and rocking over the rotten line, while the wheels made a frightful screaming sound upon the rusted surface. I was close to them, and could see their faces. Caratal was praying, I

think—there was something like a rosary dangling out of his hand. The other roared like a bull who smells the blood of the slaughter-house. He saw us standing on the bank, and he beckoned to us like a madman. Then he tore at his wrist and threw his dispatch-box out of the window in our direction. Of course, his meaning was obvious. Here was the evidence, and they would promise to be silent if their lives were spared. It would have been very agreeable if we could have done so, but business is business. Besides, the train was now as much beyond our control as theirs.

“He ceased howling when the train rattled round the curve and they saw the black mouth of the mine yawning before them. We had removed the boards which had covered it, and we had cleared the square entrance. The rails had formerly run very close to the shaft for the convenience of loading the coal, and we had only to add two or three lengths of rail in order to lead to the very brink of the shaft. In fact, as the lengths would not quite fit, our line projected about three feet over the edge. We saw the two heads at the window: Caratal below, Gomez above; but they had both been struck silent by what they saw. And yet they could not withdraw their heads. The sight seemed to have paralyzed them.

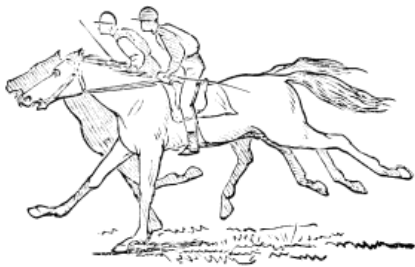
“I had wondered how the train running at a great speed would take the pit into which I had guided it, and I was much interested in watching it. One of my colleagues thought that it would actually jump it, and indeed it was not very far from doing so. Fortunately, however, it fell short, and the buffers of the engine struck the other lip of the shaft with a tremendous crash. The funnel flew off into the air. The tender, carriages, and van were all smashed up into one jumble, which, with the remains of the engine, choked for a minute or so the mouth of the pit. Then something gave way in the middle, and the whole mass of green iron, smoking coals, brass fittings, wheels, woodwork, and cushions all crumbled together and crashed down into the mine. We heard the rattle, rattle, rattle, as the *débris* struck against the walls, and then quite a long time afterwards there came a deep roar as the remains of the train struck the bottom. The boiler may have burst, for a sharp crash came after the roar, and then a dense cloud of steam and smoke swirled up out of the black depths, falling in a spray as thick as rain all round us. Then the vapour shredded off into thin wisps, which floated away in the summer sunshine, and all was quiet again in the Heartsease mine.

“And now, having carried out our plans so successfully, it only remained to leave no trace behind us. Our little band of workers at the other end had already ripped up the rails and disconnected the side line, replacing everything as it had been before. We were equally busy at the mine. The funnel and other fragments were thrown in, the shaft was planked over as it used to be, and the lines which led to it were torn up and taken away. Then, without flurry, but without delay, we all made

our way out of the country, most of us to Paris, my English colleague to Manchester, and McPherson to Southampton, whence he emigrated to America. Let the English papers of that date tell how thoroughly we had done our work, and how completely we had thrown the cleverest of their detectives off our track.

“You will remember that Gomez threw his bag of papers out of the window, and I need not say that I secured that bag and brought them to my employers. It may interest my employers now, however, to learn that out of that bag I took one or two little papers as a souvenir of the occasion. I have no wish to publish these papers; but, still, it is every man for himself in this world, and what else can I do if my friends will not come to my aid when I want them? Messieurs, you may believe that Herbert de Lernac is quite as formidable when he is against you as when he is with you, and that he is not a man to go to the guillotine until he has seen that every one of you is *_en route_* for New Caledonia. For your own sake, if not for mine, make haste, Monsieur de —, and General —, and Baron — (you can fill up the blanks for yourselves as you read this). I promise you that in the next edition there will be no blanks to fill.

“P.S.—As I look over my statement there is only one omission which I can see. It concerns the unfortunate man McPherson, who was foolish enough to write to his wife and to make an appointment with her in New York. It can be imagined that when interests like ours were at stake, we could not leave them to the chance of whether a man in that class of life would or would not give away his secrets to a woman. Having once broken his oath by writing to his wife, we could not trust him any more. We took steps therefore to insure that he should not see his wife. I have sometimes thought that it would be a kindness to write to her and to assure her that there is no impediment to her marrying again.”



RIDING AND DRIVING

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Horse in America*, by John Gilmer Speed

All of us have heard of natural riders. It must be that when any one with knowledge of the art of riding speaks in this way that he means to say that the individuals alluded to had a great natural capacity to acquire the art of riding, for riding is an art and does not come to any

one except through practice, instruction, and imitation. Some persons can acquire a foreign tongue with what seems an easy facility—while others of equal mentality—have the greatest difficulty and never succeed in any eminent degree. Those to whom the acquirement of foreign tongues is easy have a gift for languages, just as some others have a gift for mathematics or for rhyming or for drawing. And so it is in Equitation. To some riding comes easily, to others it is difficult, while some others seem absolutely incapable of acquiring a good seat, good hands, and that knowledge of horse nature which complete the equipment of every expert in the art. I confess that I do not know much about riding schools, nor indeed that I have seen much of them. When I was a boy in Kentucky there were no riding schools there, and I am not at all sure that there have ever been. And yet so competent a judge and careful an observer as Mr. Edward L. Anderson has expressed the opinion that the Kentuckians are the best riders in America.

If this be so, and I agree with him, it must be that the Kentuckians in educating their horses also educated themselves. This seems reasonable enough, for the Kentucky saddle-horse is the best trained of any saddle animals in America, though the circus tricks of what are called the “high-school horse” are unknown. It used to be common there at the county fairs to have rings for men, and for boys under fifteen, in which they competed with one another as to skill in horsemanship. The competitors put their horses through all the paces and were required by the judges to change horses, so as to see what each rider could do on a strange horse. These rings were most interesting, and the largest crowds of visitors were usually attracted by these features. I never saw any “circus tricks” but once. Then a German, who had served in the Civil War, entered in the contest making his horse do the common high-school feats, including that of going to his knees and lying down. This German carried off the blue ribbon to the amazement of many, including myself. The fact proved, however, that the Kentuckians, who happened to be judges that day, were not inhospitable to foreign ideas, and recognized that the best rider was the one who had the greatest control over his horse and could get the most out of him. Now I believe that they were right, though at the time I protested against such a judgment with all my might. Since then in the army riding schools many of these arts are properly included in the course of instruction. No good knowledge is amiss in a horse, and the best rider is he who can make his horse do the most kinds of things, even though some of them seem rather absurd and useless. It goes rather against the grain for me to say this for I, like most gentlemen riders in America, was brought up with the English notion that to ride straight and fast and be in at the finish was both the beginning and the end of horsemanship, while I looked upon anything else as not only superfluous but rather unmanly. In this country at that time, and to a very great extent now, we looked upon all the Continental people of Europe as most unsportsmanlike and mere dandy frivolars in horsemanship. This is the case in England to-day, universally the case.

There the hunting field and the polo grounds are the only places where horsemanship is put to the test. In those fields the riding of Englishmen and Irishmen is superb. No other people can compete with them. That is natural enough, however, as they do more in the way of hunting and polo than any others and pay more attention to the breeding of horses suitable to these kinds of work. But the prejudice against the Continentals in horsemanship is as insular as many other opinions that are cherished there. It is also entirely undeserved. Among the French, the Germans, the Austrians and Italians are splendid riders, men who can go anywhere an Englishman can, and also perform feats an Englishman never dreamed of.

I recall very well when Buffalo Bill first took his "Broncho Busters" to England that the press and the people, particularly the horsemen, insisted that these vicious wild horses, that had been spoiled in the breaking, were merely trick horses, trained to their antics and taught to buck and plunge and turn somersaults. At length came the request that some English riders be permitted to try the bronchos. The request was hospitably entertained, and one afternoon several men appeared. They insisted, however, that they be permitted to use English saddles and bridles. This request was acceded to and the experiments were tried. I never saw a more pitiful exhibition of helplessness. They tumbled off as though they were inexperienced babies, and some were more or less hurt. Indeed the experiments resulted in so many accidents that they were given up as too dangerous. The English saddle and the English seat are well adapted to the hunting field, but not at all suitable for the kind of riding cow-punchers have to do and the kind of horses that they have to use. This is proved by the fact that when an Englishman goes into ranch life in this country, and many of them have done it, they soon adopt the Mexican saddle and the cowboy seat. The many exhibitions given by Cody in Europe have made the people over there believe that the Rough Rider is the typical American horseman. It is unquestionably an American style that is well adapted to the work and the purpose which created it. And yet there are no schools at which a man can learn rough riding except the ranches. There I am sure there is no systematic instruction; but the beginner observes and imitates the experts, and by practice acquires the art which enables him to "bust" a broncho. Some learn quickly, some slowly, and some never at all.

This is as it is in other kinds of riding whether in the park, over the hurdles or in the hunting field. Instruction, imitation, and practice are what make a rider—the man who rides the most being apt to be the best. Even, however, when a man rides a great deal, unless he use intelligence he will never become either expert or graceful. I have known men who rode for many years without acquiring either grace or skill in the saddle. This was either from inaptitude or from a careless disregard of the principles of the art. I have known other men who had strong seats, which enabled them to acquit themselves well in the

hunting field, but who never were graceful or seemed entirely at ease. They simply lacked the grace that usually is part and parcel of good horsemanship. It is generally supposed that at West Point Military Academy there is maintained the best riding school in the country. This is probably true. But I have seen comparatively few American army officers who looked “smart” in the saddle. Their idea is, no doubt, to be businesslike rather than finished. In this I believe they are quite wrong for “slouchiness” is out of harmony with the military seat just as it is in the park or the show ring. It finds its only appropriate place among the rough riders of the plain.

“I saw young Harry, with his beaver on,
His cuisses on his thighs, gallantly arm’d,—
Rise from the ground like feather’d Mercury,
And vaulted with such ease into his seat,
As if an angel dropp’d down from the clouds,
To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus;
And witch the world with noble horsemanship.”

The Indian should probably be considered the real American type^[11] of rider. There were no horses here when the whites came, but the Indians rather quickly caught and subjugated some of the wild horses that were descended from the castaways of the Spanish explorers. They undoubtedly taught themselves to ride in the first place, though many of them had seen mounted white men. It is impossible to think that in the many generations that they have been using horses, that they have not improved in their horsemanship. At any rate they have a style of their own, and as bareback riders they cut a great dash. But they are not good horsemen. They are cruel to their horses, and are far from getting the best results out of their mounts. The whites, as was proved year after year in the frontier warfare, can outride them even when the whites carry more weight and more impedimenta.

Footnote 11:

I hope it will never occur to a visitor to this country to think that what is called the mounted traffic squad of the New York police represent any American type of riders. With them it is go-as-you-please and kind Heaven help us from falling off. Only a few moments before making this note I saw a group of these police going through the Fourth avenue. Some were ambling, some single-footing, some in a hand gallop and some trotting. One noble horse, fit for a general’s charger, was going two or three gaits at once and the rider keeping his seat with the help of the reins.

The best horseman usually gets his instruction and acquires most of his skill in his early youth. But there is no use in putting a boy on a horse until he has intelligence enough to learn what he is told to do

and strength sufficient to keep his seat and manage his horse. The pony for very young children is merely a plaything. No child ever learned much from a pony or by means of a pony. The horse is what a man rides, and it is upon a horse that a child should be taught. A large horse would not be suitable for a boy of ten or eleven, the earliest age that a boy can learn much that is valuable of the art. But the small horse, something like a polo pony for instance, may be and should be very much of a horse—all horse, indeed. Where there is a good riding school—that is the place to send a lad for his first instruction. There are some grooms, however, who make excellent instructors, even though as a general thing grooms look like the dickens in the saddle. They know horses, however, and know how to ride them, even though they do not acquire the finish and excellence that is to be expected of gentlemen. But as critics of the riding of others they are often unexcelled. Have some kind of a master, unless he be an ignoramus, for a lad in the beginning, and by no means let him go at the game by the light of nature. Uninstructed he is sure to acquire habits that it will be harder for him to overcome than it would have been for him to be correct from the beginning. And he should be given a reason for everything he is told to do. That it is necessary to be reasonable in riding makes me sometimes think that it would be just as well not to put a boy on a horse until he was fifteen or sixteen. The objection to this delay is that a lad will be kept out of four or five years of fun in the very playtime of his life.

A beginner should use only a snaffle-bit with one rein. The awkwardness of a beginner and his disposition to help keep his seat with the aid of the reins is frequently a severe hardship on a horse and pretty sure to ruin a horse's mouth. Besides both snaffle and curb are in the beginning confusing, and too much of a handful for a tyro in a novel position. Of course a correct seat in the saddle is impossible at first, but an effort at it should be made from the start. When the beginner is placed in the saddle he should sit up straight and let his legs hang down straight. Then the stirrups should be adjusted so that when the ball of the foot is upon the iron, the leg still being straight, the heel will be about three inches below the stirrup. Then the rider should be required to so bend his knees that his toe and heel will be on a level without moving back into the saddle so that his buttocks will be against the cantle. This bending of the knees will bring them in a position so that they can clutch the horse and secure his seat. Great emphasis should be laid upon the fact that the toes should not be turned out. The feet should be parallel with the horse. When they are so the knees come in contact with the saddle and the seat is secured. When a rider turns out his toes he must depend upon the calf of the leg to form his clutch. This not only is awkward, but it prevents the thighs from doing their part of the work.

Being thus mounted the beginner should only walk his horse at first.

Indeed I should not recommend anything faster than a walk in the first lesson. The object of that first lesson is to familiarize a novice to a novel position, and enable him to know something of the sensation of being astride a horse. If he go faster at first he is sure to bump around and tug on the reins, the latter being about the greatest sin against horsemanship. After this he can go in a very slow trot, and still later in a hand gallop. Having acquired the capacity to keep his seat in these gaits with his feet parallel to the horse and his knees well in and without tugging on the reins to keep his balance, he has reached the point when he may be instructed to ride with both reins, snaffle, and curb. There are some riders who never use other than the snaffle, indeed it was quite a fad in the neighborhood of New York a few years ago. But I do not believe that the very best results can be obtained without the curb. The curb enables a rider to keep his horse better in hand, and a horse not in hand under the saddle is apt to do several disagreeable things—sprawl or be slouchy in his gaits, for instance, or worse than all tumble down.

To hold the snaffle and curb reins in the left hand properly so that either one or both may be used at pleasure is most important. The reins of the curb bit should be divided by the little finger, the reins of the snaffle by the long finger, the loose ends of both pairs being carried through the hand and held by the thumb against the forefinger. The right hand should be kept on the loose ends of the reins behind the left, and when reins are needed to be shortened the right hand should pull them or either of them through the bridle hand; but when the right hand is needed in assistance of the bridle hand, the right should be placed in front of the left. The knuckles of the bridle rein should be kept up. This all seems simple enough, and it is so simple when learned that an experienced rider never gives it a thought; but new riders some times find it hard to learn, indeed some never learn it.

The beginner should not use a spur. Most people think a spur is an instrument of punishment. It should seldom be so used. It is merely a tool to assist the rider in conveying his wishes to the horse. But to an obstinate, pig-headed horse it is a reminder that the rider has something in reserve. The horse, by the way, is not the intellectual animal that some think, and “horse sense” ought not to be much of a compliment to a man. Seven horses out of ten will become bullies, and get the upper hand if they be suffered so to do. There is one sense, however, that even a bullying horse always preserves—he knows the touch of the master hand and stops his “monkey shines” in very short order. But there are other horses—crazy horses and fool horses. The crazy horse can be subdued by the Rarey or other similar method, but for the fool horse there is no hope. He learns nothing, remembers nothing—the glue factory for him is the only proper place.

And how late in life can a man take up horseback riding? That is hard to

say. There are men and men—some at forty are to all intents and purposes sixty, while others at sixty appear not over forty. So long as a man retains a reasonable amount of suppleness and agility he is not too old to take up horseback riding and get great pleasure and benefit out of it, while if he began as a youth and has kept it up there is no reason why he should give it up so long as he can sit a horse and the exercise is not too exhausting. Remember what Lord Palmerston said: “The best thing for the inside of a man is the outside of a horse.” And it is so; there is no exercise that so aids digestion, none which more completely takes the cobwebs out of the brain. A man who takes up horseback riding in middle life need not expect to become as accomplished as his son who began at twelve; but if he will give his mind to it he will be apt to do very well and will surely get from it both pleasure and profit. I know a lady who did not take up horseback riding until she was a mother. I have seen her in the hunting field since she became a grandmother sailing along as gaily as a bird, and even taking a tumble with the serene amiability of a youth in small clothes. But she has found the fabled spring.

That every rider will sooner or later have a fall is inevitable. Therefore when the first one comes there should be no discouragement, even to a man of middle age. Many falls are prevented when a horse stumbles by gathering the horse, and assisting him to regain his footing. But often, in jumping particularly, the fall cannot be prevented. When the rider feels it coming the best way is to take the feet from the stirrups, tuck in the chin, and fall as much like a ball as possible, holding the reins, however, until the feet are surely clear of the stirrups. I was recently knocked off my horse on a steep hillside path by coming in contact with the limb of a tree. I rolled down the hillside for fifty feet, but suffered no inconvenience though I weigh 175 pounds and carry an undue amount of that weight at the middle. Had I landed on my head, the consequences would probably have been serious.

Every rider should learn how to make a horse change his lead in the gallop, that is, change the leading foot from right to left and back again. Horses naturally go with the right foot in front or the left foot in front, as the case may be, just as children are more dextrous with the right hand or the left. When the change is desired, the horse should be well in hand, and when from right to left is required the right heel should be applied when the leading foot is on the ground, and the hind legs are leaving it; immediately thereafter as the right fore foot is rising the left rein should make a slight play and the change in lead will be effected without a false step or disturbance in pace. Every rider should practise making figure eights, each circle being from twenty to thirty feet in diameter, and asking his horse to change the lead when going from one circle to the other. In some show rings the judges require that the riders do this, and those who accomplish it easily and gracefully help their score very considerably.

The American jockeys have developed a new method of race riding, a kind of acrobatic horsemanship, which when the English first saw it they called the “monkey-on-the-stick” style. The jockeys use very short stirrups and seem to throw the weight even forward of the withers so as to relieve the hind legs, where the propelling power is, from as much weight as possible. It seems effective and has been almost universally adopted by all save steeplechase riders, who still use a stirrup long enough for both knees and legs to embrace the horse—or as Mr. Anderson says, they still ride like men.

A good rider is apt to be also a tolerable driver. The contrary of this, however, is not in the least the case. There are many good drivers who were never mounted in their lives. Probably also there are many more good drivers in this country than good riders. It is with us a more universal method of employing the horse. Notwithstanding this, good driving is by no means universal. Indeed I doubt whether it is common. It seems the easiest thing in the world to sit in a wagon and pull on the right rein or the left and go wheresoever one chooses. Because it seems so easy all kinds and conditions of people essay to drive no matter how little experience they may have. I have sometimes been nearly scared out of my wits in driving with a man or woman whose every act displayed ignorance of even first principles. Probably no more grievous insult could be paid to a man than to betray lack of confidence in his capacity to drive, and latterly when I have been asked to go with a man, even to the golf links two miles away, when I knew he did not know how to handle the reins or manage a horse I have blandly declined. Death comes to all of us, but there seems to be lack of wisdom in seeking it in such an ignoble fashion.

The men who train trotting horses in America are the most wonderful drivers the world has ever seen. They seem to get more speed out of a horse at less expense than any others. I have often thought that the lowering of trotting records in America had been assisted in a great degree by the increasing skill of American drivers. How many seconds this skill may be responsible for I have no idea—maybe one second, maybe five or ten. But their patience in developing the horse and their skill in driving is responsible for a good deal. I have often watched the trotters on the Speedway in New York, and many a time I have seen contests which I was sure would have been reversed had the drivers been changed. No doubt some men have an aptness for driving, just as others have an aptness for riding; but driving is also an art which can be acquired only by instruction, imitation, and practice together with a knowledge of and consideration for horses. There are so many things that a man must know to make him a good driver that it would take a book by itself in which to set down the rules. I shall not make such an essay, but content myself with a few fundamental principles.

The first that I shall mention may seem trifling but is really of much importance. It matters not so much what kind of coat a driver may wear, but he must have a hat that fits so well that it will not be blown off even in a gale. Many awkward happenings have resulted from a driver's efforts to secure his hat at a moment when all his attention was needed by his horse or horses. He should also have proper gloves. They should be loose enough to enable him free use of his fingers, and indeed of all of his hands, but not so loose that they will slip off while he is driving. A size larger than his dress gloves would, I should say, be about the right thing. They should also be heavy enough to prevent the reins from hurting his hands. Dogskin is probably the best material.

Then he should, even in a runabout, be, at least, above his horse. This is regulated by a driver's cushion with a slant, the back being about three inches above the front. His feet should not be sprawled out against the dashboard, nor yet tucked awkwardly underneath him. Indeed with a driver's cushion either attitude would be uncomfortable if not impossible. What he should seek for is a position in which he is at ease in all his movements for a driver has to drive all the time, at every moment from the starting out until he sets foot on the ground and turns over his horse to the groom. It is carelessness in driving that causes nearly all the accidents, for it is the unexpected that is always happening.

One should always drive with the left hand, using the right to hold the whip and give assistance to the left when it is required to shorten the rein. A good mouth is just as excellent in a driving horse as in a saddle-horse. The mouth should be like velvet, and at all times responsive to the telegraphic signal from the hands of the driver. To drive with a slack rein makes a horse slouchy even when a check is used. To pull on a horse hardens his mouth and lessens the control of the driver. Nothing is more unpleasant than a pulling horse. It is as fatiguing in harness as in the saddle. And a puller is the easiest thing to accomplish. When it has been accomplished the driver does as much work as the horse. To smack a horse with the reins instead of using the whip may be well enough for old Dobbin on the farm, but it is a silly habit which hurts the horse, without being effective for the purpose intended, while it proves the driver to have no knowledge of the business. Jerking on the reins, or rather giving a pull and then letting them loose to make a horse quicken his gait is unworthy even of a peddler or a city huckster.

Keep your eye on your horse. That is the most important thing in driving. The driver is in command, and it is the horse's part to obey. This may seem an unnecessary thing when jogging along on a long clear road. But we should not jog along. A brisk pace is the proper pace to drive at, and if the road be very long a rest can be taken and no time be lost, while if the journey be only seven or eight miles the brisk

pace reduces the time, and the horse is sooner in the stable and at rest. Poking along at a jog will in time ruin any horse. It will spoil his style, detract from his speed, and take away his spirit. When a horse is taken along briskly, it is absolutely necessary to keep him always well in hand—not a pulling on the bit, but a feeling of the bit so that the horse will know every instant of the time that he is being driven by one who is master.

A driver should keep in communion with his horse. A horse has a keen sense of hearing and a good memory for a voice. The master should have his horse well acquainted with his voice. But he should not do too much talking or chirruping when other horses are about. That is a discourtesy to other drivers whose horses may be fretted and made restless when it is meant that they should stand still. The disregard of this is not only annoying but has been the cause of many accidents at crowded railway stations, where many traps are waiting for the home-comers.

As to the method of holding the reins Mr. Price Collier, a most accomplished horseman and charming writer on driving says: “The reins should be held with the near rein between the thumb and first finger, the off-rein between the third and fourth fingers. Hold your hand so that your knuckles, turned towards your horse, and the buttons on your waistcoat, will make two parallel lines up and down with the hand three or four inches from the body. The reins should be clasped, or held by the two lower, or fourth and fifth fingers; the second finger should point straight across and upward enough to keep the near rein over the knuckle of that finger and the thumb pointing in the same direction, but not so much upward. The reins are held not by squeezing them on their flat surfaces, but by pressure on their edges. The edges, in a word, being held between the two last fingers and the root of the thumb. This arrangement makes a flexible joint of the wrist, for the reins and for the bit to play upon. This suppleness of wrist, just enough and not too much, is what is called ‘hands.’ It means that your wrist gives just enough play to the horse’s mouth to enable him to feel your influence, without being either confused or hampered by it. As this is the key to perfection in all driving, everybody claims to possess it; only the elect few have it.”

In leaving the stable or starting out from any other place, you should go quietly. Nothing is more vulgar than to rush off with the idea of “cutting a dash.” It does not give the horse a fair show, and driver and horse are not yet in good adjustment. And in stopping also it is vulgar to rush to the stopping place and throw the horse on his haunches by a quick pull. Neither of these things is done by good drivers, but is the practice of either the ignorant or vulgar who wish to attract attention to themselves at places where there are likely to be spectators.

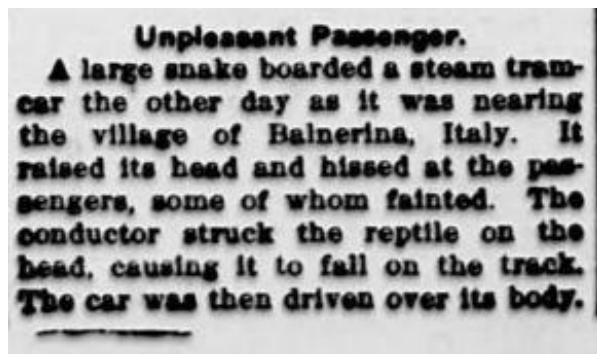
I have often heard it said that two horses were easier to drive than

one. I always marked down the person who made such a remark as not being thoroughly in earnest, or not knowing the subject he was discussing. I do not know how much harder it is to drive two horses than one. That is I cannot express the difference mathematically. But there is a good deal. Any reasonably strong man can prevent one horse from getting away with him. Few can prevent a thoroughly frightened team if they once get off. The thing is not to let them get off. Not to permit this requires that he shall control two animals, for when one of a pair gets frightened he quickly communicates his fear to his mate. When the panic is serious then serious trouble is likely to ensue. With a runaway horse or a runaway pair the circumstances of the moment must control. If the road is clear and the driver can keep the horse straight all may go well; but horses nearly always choose to get frightened when the conditions are nearly the opposite of this. Then the circumstances of the moment must guide the driver. If he keeps his head cool and can prevent collisions, he will probably come out safely. But the best of them have been run away with. This comes sooner or later to every man who uses horses constantly. Eternal vigilance will prevent most all of the accidents that might happen; but human nature is fallible and horses are very uncertain. Carelessness in the driver, however, is responsible for ninety and nine of every hundred driving accidents that happen. The flying automobile, in recent years, has been responsible for a great many. I must say, however, that I never met but once with anything but the greatest consideration from automobilists that I have encountered when driving. The discourteous one proved to be a dentist, and the mission of dentists in the world is, I believe, to give people pain.

Every driver should know when his horses are properly harnessed and hitched to the vehicle. And he should never fail to look over the whole "turn out" in every detail to see that all is secure and each part in proper adjustment to every other part. The horse show authorities have formulated rules as to what is proper for one vehicle and another. The experts are veritable martinets and attach as much importance to a strap here and a buckle there as the unlucky King of Prussia, who did battle with Napoleon, attached to one row or two rows of buttons on a soldier's coat. Intelligence, however, can find its way without much regard to these fine points. But it is never safe to trust to grooms and stablemen even though they may really know more about it than the driver himself. The driver is the master, and he should make the inspection even though it be only a formal one—he should assume a virtue though he has it not. Inspections of the work of stablemen do not go amiss unless the unlucky master should take to finding mares' nests. Two or three such discoveries will hurt discipline amazingly.

There is now a good deal of four-in-hand driving in America. It is only now pleasure driving, and quite different from that of the coaching days of our grandfathers' time. This is an art which a man may be able to pick up himself. But the safest and quickest course is to take

instruction from a professional or from a friend, if so amiable a friend can be found. It is, of course, more difficult to drive four than two horses. But this can be learned by any cool-headed man who has the good fortune to be a horseman to start out with. Not having that gift he would do well to let it alone. Some of the most accomplished four-in-hand drivers about New York are women, which shows that it is not main strength that is effective, but skill and practice. Practice and intelligence combined will overcome most all of the difficulties. By practice I do not mean an hour a day for a couple of weeks, but six hours a day for two or three years; and by intelligence I mean the instructed knowledge which enables a driver to know the reason for each thing that is done.



1914 wire-story

ANOTHER WAY OUT

The Project Gutenberg eBook of *Fifty Contemporary One-Act Plays*, by Various

A COMEDY

BY Lawrence Langner

ANOTHER WAY OUT was originally produced by the Washington Square Players at the Comedy Theatre, New York, on November 13th, 1916, with the following cast:

MARGARET MARSHALL	_Gwladys Wynne_.
MRS. ABBEY	_Jean Robb_.
POMEROY PENDLETON	_Jose Ruben_.
BARONESS DE MEAUVILLE	_Helen Westley_.
CHARLES P. K. FENTON	_Robert Strange_.

TIME: _The Present_.

Produced under the direction of MR. PHILLIP MOELLER.

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permission to perform ANOTHER WAY OUT must be made to Lawrence Langner, 55 Liberty Street, New York.

ANOTHER WAY OUT

A COMEDY BY LAWRENCE LANGNER

[SCENE: _The studio in Pendleton's apartment. A large room, with sky-light in center wall, doors right and left, table set for breakfast; a vase with red flowers decorates the table. Center back stage, in front of sky-light, modeling stand upon which is placed a rough statuette, covered by cloth. To one side of this is a large screen. The furnishings are many hued, the cushions a flare of color, and the pictures fantastically futuristic._

At Rise: Mrs. Abbey, a benevolent looking, middle-aged woman, in neat clothes and apron, is arranging some dishes on the table. Margaret, a very modern young woman, is exercising vigorously. She is decidedly good-looking. Her eyes are direct, her complexion fresh, and her movements free. Her brown hair is "bobbed," and she wears a picturesque Grecian robe.]

MRS. ABBEY. Breakfast is ready, ma'am.

[_Margaret sits at table and helps herself. Exit Mrs. Abbey, left._]

MARGARET [_calling_]. Pommy dear. Breakfast is on the table.

PENDLETON [_from without_]. I'll be there in a moment.

[_Margaret glances through paper; Pendleton enters, door right. He is tall and thin, and of æsthetic appearance. His long blond hair is brushed loosely over his forehead and he is dressed in a heliotrope-colored dressing gown. He lights a cigarette._]

MARGARET. I thought you were going to stop smoking before breakfast.

PENDLETON. My dear, I can't possibly stand the taste of tooth paste in my mouth all day.

[_Pendleton sits at table. Enters Mrs. Abbey with tray. Pendleton helps himself, then drops his knife and fork with a clang. Mrs. Abbey and Margaret are startled._]

MRS. ABBEY. Anything the matter, sir?

PENDLETON. Dear, dear! My breakfast is quite spoiled again.

MRS. ABBEY [_concerned_]. Spoiled, sir?

PENDLETON [_pointing to red flowers on breakfast table_]. Look at those flowers, Mrs. Abbey. Not only are they quite out of harmony with the color scheme in this room, but they're positively red, and you know I have a perfect horror of red.

MRS. ABBEY. But you like them that color sometimes, sir. What am I to do when you're so temperamental about 'em.

MARGARET. Temperamental. I should say bad-tempered.

MRS. ABBEY [_soothingly_]. Oh no, ma'am. It isn't bad temper. I understand Mr. Pendleton. It's just another bad night he's had, that's what it is.

PENDLETON [_sarcastically polite_]. Mrs. Abbey, you appear to have an intimate knowledge of how I pass the nights. It's becoming quite embarrassing.

MRS. ABBEY. You mustn't mind an old woman like me, sir.

[_The sound of a piano hopelessly out of tune, in the apartment upstairs, is heard, the player banging out Mendelssohn's Wedding March with unusual insistence._]

PENDLETON. There! That confounded piano again!

MARGARET. And they always play the Wedding March. There must be an old maid living there.

MRS. ABBEY. They're doing that for a reason.

MARGARET. What reason?

MRS. ABBEY. Their cook tole me yesterday that her missus thinks if she keeps on a-playing of the Wedding March, p'raps it'll give you an' Mr. Pendleton the idea of getting married. She don't believe in couples livin' to-gether, like you an' Mr. Pendleton.

MARGARET. No?

MRS. ABBEY. And I just said you an' Mr. Pendleton had been living together so long, it was my opinion you might just as well be married

an' done with it.

MARGARET [_angrily_]. Your opinion is quite uncalled for, Mrs. Abbey.

PENDLETON. Why shouldn't Mrs. Abbey give us her opinion? It may be valuable. Look at her experiences in matrimony.

MRS. ABBEY. In matrimony, and out of it, too.

MARGARET [_sitting_]. But Mrs. Abbey has no right to discuss our affairs with other people's maids.

MRS. ABBEY. I'll be glad to quit if I don't suit the mistress.

MARGARET [_angrily_]. There! Mistress again! How often have I asked you not to refer to me as the mistress?

MRS. ABBEY. No offense, ma'am.

PENDLETON. You'd better see if there's any mail, Mrs. Abbey, and take those flowers away with you.

MRS. ABBEY. Very well, sir.

[_Exit Mrs. Abbey door center._]

MARGARET. What an old-fashioned point of view Mrs. Abbey has.

[_Pendleton takes up paper and commences to read._]

MARGARET. Pommy, why do you stoop so?

PENDLETON. Am I stooping?

MARGARET. I'm tired of telling you. You ought to take more exercise.

[_Pendleton continues to read._]

MARGARET. One reason why the Greeks were the greatest of artists was because they cultivated the body as carefully as the mind.

PENDLETON. Oh! Hang the Greeks!

[_Enter Mrs. Abbey right, with letters._]

MRS. ABBEY. There are your letters, sir. [_Coldly._] And these are yours, ma'am.

[Exit Mrs. Abbey left.]

MARGARET [who has opened her letters meanwhile]. How delightful! Tom Del Valli has asked us to a party at his studio next Friday.

PENDLETON [opening his letters]. Both of us?

MARGARET [giving him letter]. Yes, and Helen Marsden wants us for Saturday.

PENDLETON. Both of us?

MARGARET [picking up another letter]. Yes, and here's one from Bobby Watson for Sunday.

PENDLETON. Both of us?

MARGARET. Yes.

PENDLETON. Really, Margaret, this is becoming exasperating. [Holds up letters.] Here are four more, I suppose for both of us. People keep on inviting us out together time after time as though we were the most conventional married couple on God's earth.

MARGARET. Do you object to going out with me?

PENDLETON [doubtfully]. No, it isn't that. But we're having too much of a good thing. And I've come to the conclusion that it's your fault.

MARGARET [indignantly]. Oh! it's my fault? Of course you'd blame me. Why?

PENDLETON. Because you have such an absurd habit of boasting to people of your devotion for me, when we're out.

MARGARET. You surely don't expect me to quarrel with you in public?

PENDLETON. It isn't necessary to go to that extent. But then everybody believes that we're utterly, almost stupidly in love with one another, what can you expect?

MARGARET. You said once you never wanted me to suppress anything.

PENDLETON. That was before we began to live together.

MARGARET. What could I have done?

PENDLETON [up right]. Anything just so we could have a little more

freedom instead of being tied to one another the way we are. Never a moment when we're not together, never a day when I'm not interviewed by special article writers from almost every paper and magazine in the country, as the only successful exponent of the theory that love can be so perfect that the marriage contract degrades it. I put it to you, Margaret, if this is a free union it is simply intolerable!

MARGARET. But aren't we living together so as to have more freedom? Think of what it might be if we were married. Didn't you once write that "When marriage comes in at the door, freedom flies out at the window"?

PENDLETON. Are we any better off, with everybody treating us as though we were living together to prove a principle?

MARGARET. Well, aren't we incidently? You said so yourself. We can be a beautiful example to other people, and show them how to lead the pure natural lives of the later Greeks?

PENDLETON. Damn the later Greeks! Why do you always throw those confounded later Greeks in my face? We've got to look at it from our standpoint. This situation must come to an end.

MARGARET. What can we do?

PENDLETON. It rests with you.

MARGARET. With me?

PENDLETON. You can compromise yourself with somebody publicly. That'll put an end to everything.

MARGARET. How will that end it?

PENDLETON. It'll break down the morally sanctified atmosphere in which we're living. Then perhaps, people will regard us as immoral and treat us like decent human beings again.

MARGARET. But I don't want to compromise myself.

PENDLETON. If you believe in your own ideas, you must.

MARGARET. But why should I have to do it?

PENDLETON. It will be so easy for you.

MARGARET. Why can't we both be compromised? That would be better still.

PENDLETON. I should find it a bore. You, unless my memory fails me,

would enjoy it.

MARGARET. You needn't be cynical. Even if you don't enjoy it, you can work it into a novel.

PENDLETON. It's less exertion to imagine an affair of that sort, and the result would probably be more saleable. Besides I have no interest whatsoever in women, at least, in the women we know.

MARGARET. For that matter, I don't know any eligible men.

PENDLETON. What about Bob Lockwood?

MARGARET. But he's your best friend!

PENDLETON. Exactly--no man ever really trusts his best friend. He'll probably compromise you without compunction.

MARGARET. I'm afraid he'd be too dangerous--he tells you all his secrets. Whom will you choose?

PENDLETON. It's a matter of complete indifference to me.

MARGARET. I've heard a lot of queer stories about Jean Roberts. How would she do?

PENDLETON [_firmly_]. Margaret, I don't mind being party to a flirtation--but I draw the line at being the victim of a seduction.

MARGARET. Why not leave it to chance? Let it be the next interesting woman you meet.

PENDLETON. That might be amusing. But there must be an age limit. And how about you?

MARGARET [_takes cloth off statuette and discloses figure of Apollo in rough modeling clay_]. Me! Why not the new model who is coming to-day to pose for my Apollo?

PENDLETON. Well, if he's anything like that, you ought to be able to create a sensation. Then, perhaps, we shall have some real freedom.

MARGARET. Pommy, do you still love me as much as you did?

PENDLETON. How you sentimentalize! Do you think I'd be willing to enter into a flirtation with a strange woman, if I didn't want to keep on living with you?

MARGARET. And we won't have to break up our little home, will we?

PENDLETON. No, anything to save the home. [_Catches himself._] My God! If any of my readers should hear me say that! To think that I, Pomeroy Pendleton, should be trying to save my own home. And yet, how characteristically paradoxical.

MARGARET [_interrupting_]. You are going to philosophize! Give me a kiss.

[_She goes to him, sits on his lap, and places her arm on his shoulder; he takes out cigarette, she lights it for him._]

PENDLETON [_brought back to reality_]. I have some work to do--I must go.

MARGARET. A kiss!

PENDLETON [_kisses her carelessly_]. There let me go.

MARGARET. I want a real kiss.

PENDLETON. Don't be silly, dear, I can't play this morning. I've simply got to finish my last chapter.

[_A bell rings, Mrs. Abbey enters and goes to door._]

MRS. ABBEY. There's a lady to see Mr. Pendleton.

MARGARET. Tell her to come in!

PENDLETON. But, Margaret!

MARGARET. Remember! [_Significantly._] The first woman you meet!

[_Exit Margaret. Mrs. Abbey enters with Baroness de Meauville.
Exit Mrs. Abbey._]

BARONESS DE MEAUVILLE [_speaking with a pronounced English accent_]. Good morning, Mr. Pendleton, I'm the Baroness de Meauville!

PENDLETON [_recalling her name_]. Baroness de Meauville? Ah, the costumiere?

BARONESS. Not a costumiere, Mr. Pendleton, I am an artist, an artist in modern attire. A woman is to me what a canvas is to a painter.

PENDLETON. Excuse me for receiving you in my dressing gown. I was at

work.

BARONESS. I like to see men in dressing gowns--yours is charming.

PENDLETON [_flattered and pleased_]. Do you like it? I designed it myself.

BARONESS [_looking seductively into his eyes_]. How few really creative artists there are in America.

PENDLETON [_modestly_]. You flatter me.

BARONESS. Not at all. You must know that I'm a great admirer of yours, Mr. Pendleton. I've read every one of your books. I feel I know you as an old friend.

PENDLETON. That's very nice of you!

[_The Baroness reclines on couch; takes jeweled cigarette case from reticule and offers Pendleton a cigarette._]

BARONESS. Will you smoke?

PENDLETON. Thanks.

[_Pendleton lights her cigarette, then his own. He draws his chair up to the couch. An atmosphere of mutual interest is established._]

BARONESS. Mr. Pendleton, I have a mission in life. It is to make the American woman the best dressed woman in the world. I came here to-day because I want you to help me.

PENDLETON. But I have no ambitions in that direction.

BARONESS. Why should you have ambitions? Only the bourgeoisie have ambitions. We artists have inspirations. I want to breathe into you the spirit of my great undertaking. Already I have opened my place in the smartest part of the Avenue. Already I have drawn my assistants from all parts of the world. Nothing is lacking to complete my plans but you.

PENDLETON. Me? Why me?

BARONESS [_endearingly_]. Are you not considered one of the foremost men of letters in America?

PENDLETON [_modestly_]. Didn't you say you had read all my books?

BARONESS. Are you not the only writer who has successfully portrayed the emotional side of American life?

PENDLETON [_decidedly_]. Yes.

BARONESS. Exactly. That is why I have chosen you to write my advertisements.

PENDLETON [_aghast_]. But, Baroness!

BARONESS. You're not going to say that. It's so ordinary.

PENDLETON. But, but, you want me to write advertisements!

BARONESS. Please don't disappoint me.

PENDLETON. Yes, I suppose that's so. But one has a sense of pride.

BARONESS. Art comes before Pride. Consider my feelings, an aristocrat, coming here to America and engaging in commerce, and advertising, and other dreadful things, and all for the sake of Art!

PENDLETON. But you make money out of it!

BARONESS. Only incidentally. Just as you, in writing my advertisements, would make, say ten thousand or so, as a sort of accident. But don't let us talk of money. It's perfectly revolting, isn't it? Art is Life, and I believe in Life for Art's sake. That's why I'm a success.

PENDLETON. Indeed? How interesting. Please go on.

BARONESS. When a woman comes to me for a gown, I don't measure body, why should I? I measure her mind. I find her color harmony. In a moment I can tell whether she ought to wear scarlet, mauve, taupe, magenta, or any other color, so as to fall into her proper rhythm. Every one has a rhythm, you know. [_Pendleton sits on sofa._] But I don't have to explain all this to you, Mr. Pendleton. You understand it intuitively. This heliotrope you are wearing shows me at once that you are in rhythm.

PENDLETON [_thinks of Margaret_]. I'm not so sure that I am. What you say interests me. May I ask you a question?

BARONESS. Yes, but I may not answer it.

PENDLETON. Why do you wear heliotrope and the same shade as mine?

BARONESS [_with mock mystery_]. You mustn't ask me that.

PENDLETON. I'm all curiosity.

BARONESS. Curiosity is dangerous.

PENDLETON. Supposing I try to find out?

BARONESS. That may be even more dangerous.

PENDLETON. I'm fond of that kind of danger.

BARONESS. Take care! I'm very fragile.

PENDLETON. Isn't heliotrope in rhythm with the faint reflection of passion?

BARONESS. How brutal of you to have said it.

PENDLETON [_coming closer to her_]. I, too, am in rhythm with heliotrope.

BARONESS [_with joy_]. How glad I am. Thank God you've no desire to kiss my lips.

PENDLETON. Only your finger-tips.

[_They exchange kisses on finger-tips._]

PENDLETON. Your fingers are like soft, pale, waxen tapers!

BARONESS. Your kisses are the breathings that light them into quivering flame!

PENDLETON. Exquisite--exquisite!

BARONESS [_withdrawing her hands_]. That was a moment!

PENDLETON. We must have many such.

BARONESS. Many? That's too near too much.

PENDLETON [_feverishly_]. We shall, dear lady.

BARONESS. How I adore your writings! They have made me realize the beauty of an ideal union, the love of one man for one woman at a time. Let us have such a union, you and me.

PENDLETON [_taken back_]. But I live in such a union already.

BARONESS [_rising in amazement_]. And only a moment ago you kissed me!

PENDLETON. Well--what of it?

BARONESS. Don't you see what we've done? You are living in one of those wonderful unions you describe in your books--and I've let you kiss me. I've committed a sacrilege.

PENDLETON. You're mistaken. It isn't a sacrilege. It's an opportunity.

BARONESS [_dramatically_]. How can you say that--you whose words have inspired my deepest intimacies. No, I must go. [_Makes for the door._]
I--must--go.

PENDLETON. You don't understand. I exaggerated everything so in my confounded books.

BARONESS. Please ask her to forgive me. Please tell her I thought you were married, otherwise, never, never, would I have permitted you to kiss me.

PENDLETON. What made you think I was married?

BARONESS. One often believes what one hopes.

PENDLETON. You take it too seriously. Let me explain.

BARONESS. What is there to explain? Our experience has been complete. Why spoil it by anti-climax?

PENDLETON. Am I never to see you again?

BARONESS. Who knows? If your present union should end, and some day your soul needs--some one?

[_Exit door center, her manner full of promise._]

PENDLETON [_with feeling_]. Good-by--long, pale fingers.

[_Enter Margaret, door right._]

MARGARET. Did you get a good start with the scandal?

PENDLETON. Not exactly. I may as well admit it was a failure through no fault of mine, of course. And now, I simply must finish that last chapter.

[_He exits. Margaret rings. Mrs. Abby enters._]

MARGARET. You may clear, Mrs. Abbey.

MRS. ABBEY. Very well, ma'am.

[_She attends to clearing the table._]

MARGARET. Mrs. Abbey, have you worked for many people living together, like Mr. Pendleton and myself?

MRS. ABBEY. Lor', Ma'am, yes. I've worked in nearly every house on the south side of Washington Square.

MARGARET. Mr. Pendleton says I'm as domestic as any wife could be. Were the others like me?

MRS. ABBEY. Most of them, ma'am, but some was regular hussies; not only a-livin' with their fellers--but havin' a good time, too. That's what I call real immoral.

[_Bell rings. Mrs. Abbey opens door center and passes out. Conversation with Fenton without is heard. Mrs. Abbey comes back._]

MRS. ABBEY. A young man wants to see you, ma'am.

MARGARET. That's the new model. I'll get my working apron.

[_Exit Margaret, door right. Mrs. Abbey calls through door center._]

MRS. ABBEY. You c'n come in.

[_Enter door left, Charles P. K. Fenton, dictionary salesman. He is a strikingly handsome young man, offensively smartly dressed in a black and white check suit, gaudy tie, and white socks. His hair is brushed back from his forehead like a glossy sheath. He carries a black bag. His manner is distinctly "male."_]

MRS. ABBEY [_points to screen_]. You can undress behind there.

FENTON. Undress? Say, what's this? A Turkish bath?

MRS. ABBEY. Did you expect to have a private room all to yourself?

FENTON [_looking around_]. What am I to undress for?

MRS. ABBEY. The missus will be here in a minute.

FENTON. Good night! I'm goin'.

[_Makes for door._]

MRS. ABBEY. What's the matter? Ain't you the Missus' new model?

FENTON. A model! Ha! Ha! You've sure got the wrong number this time. I'm in the dictionary line, ma'am.

MRS. ABBEY. Well, of all the impudence! You a book agent, and a-walkin' in here.

FENTON. Well, you asked me in, didn't you? Can't I see the missus, jest for a minute?

MRS. ABBEY [_good-naturedly_]. Very well. Here she is.
[_Confidentially._] And I advise you to remove that Spearmint from your mouth, if you want to sell any dictionaries in this house.

FENTON [_placing hand to mouth_]. Where shall I put it?

MRS. ABBEY. You'd better swallow it!

[_Fenton tries to do so, chokes, turns red, and places his hand to mouth._]

MARGARET [_to Fenton_]. I'm so glad to see you.

[_Fenton is most embarrassed. Mrs. Abbey, in surprise, attempts to explain situation._]

MRS. ABBEY. But, ma'am--

MARGARET. You may go, Mrs. Abbey.

MRS. ABBEY. But, but, ma'am--

MARGARET [_severely_]. You may go, Mrs. Abbey. [_Exit Mrs. Abbey in a huff._] I'm so glad they sent you up to see me. Won't you sit down?

[_Fenton finds it a difficult matter to handle the situation. He adopts his usual formula for an "opening," but his speech is mechanical and without conviction. Margaret adds to the embarrassment by stepping around him and examining him with professional interest._]

FENTON. Madam, I represent the Globe Advertising Publishing Sales Co., the largest publishers of dictionaries in the world.

MARGARET [_continuing to appraise him_]. Then you're not the new model?

FENTON. No, ma'am.

MARGARET. What a pity! Never mind, go on.

FENTON. As I was saying, ma'am, I represent the Advertising Globe Publishing--I mean the Globe Publishing Sales Publishing Co., the largest publishers of dictionaries in the world. For some time past we have felt there was a demand for a new Encyclopaedic Dictionary, madam, one that would not only fill up a good deal of space in the bookshelf, making an attractive addition to the home, but also containing the most complete collection of words in the English language.

MARGARET [_who has taken a pencil and is measuring Fenton while he speaks; Fenton's discomfort is obvious. He attempts to rearrange his tie and coat, thinking she is examining him._] Please go on talking, it's so interesting.

FENTON. Statistics show that the Woman of Average Education in America, Madam, has command of but fifteen hundred words. This new dictionary, Madam, [_Produces book from bag._] will give you command of over eight hundred and fifty thousand.

MARGARET [_archly_]. So you are a dealer in words--how perfectly romantic.

FENTON [_warming_]. Most of these words, madam, are not used more than a dozen times a year. They are our Heritage from the Past. And all these words, to say nothing of the fact that the dictionary fills five inches in a bookshelf, making an attractive addition to the library, being handsomely bound in half-cloth--all these are yours, ma'am, for the price of one dollar.

[_He places dictionary in her hand. She examines it._]

FENTON. If you have a son, madam, the possession of this dictionary will give him an opportunity of acquiring that knowledge of our language which made Abraham Lincoln the Father of our Country. Madam, opportunity knocks at the door only once and _This_ is _your_ opportunity at one dollar.

MARGARET [_meaningly_]. Yes, this is my opportunity! I'll buy the dictionary and now [_sweetly_] won't you tell me your name?

FENTON [_pocketing dollar_]. My name is Charles P. K. Fenton.

MARGARET. Mr. Fenton, would you mind doing me a favor?

FENTON [_looking dubiously towards the screen_]. Why, I guess not, ma'am.

MARGARET. I want you to take off your coat.

FENTON [_puzzled_]. You're not trying to kid me, ma'am?

MARGARET. I just want to see your development. Do you mind?

FENTON [_removes coat_]. Why, no, ma'am, if that's all you want.

MARGARET. Now, bring your arm up, tighten the muscles. [_Fenton does as she bids; Margaret thumps his arm approvingly._] Splendid! You must take lots of exercise, Mr. Fenton.

FENTON. Not me, ma'am. I never had no time for exercise; I got that workin' in a freight yard.

Margaret. I suppose you think me rather peculiar, Mr. Fenton.

FENTON. You said it, Miss.

MARGARET. You see I'm a sculptress. [_Points to statuette._] This is my work.

FENTON. You made that? Gee! that's great. [_Examines statuette._] Just like them statues at the Metropolitan.

MARGARET. That figure is Apollo, Mr. Fenton.

FENTON. Oh, Apollo.

MARGARET. I was to engage a professional model for it, but I could never hope to get a professional as fine a type as you. Will you pose for it?

FENTON [_aghast_]. Me? That feller there without any clothes. [_Dubiously._] Well, I don't know. It's kind of chilly here.

MARGARET. If I draped you, it would spoil some of your lines. [_Seeing his hesitation._] But I will if you like.

FENTON [_relieved_]. Ah, now you're talking.

MARGARET. So, you'll really come?

FENTON. How about this evening?

MARGARET. Splendid! Sit down. [_Fenton does so._] Mr. Fenton, you've quite aroused my curiosity. I know so few business men. Is your work interesting?

FENTON. Well, I can't say it was, until I started selling around this neighborhood.

MARGARET. Is it difficult?

FENTON. Not if you've got personality, Miss. That's the thing, personality. If a feller hasn't got personality, he can't sell goods, that's sure.

MARGARET. What do you mean by personality, Mr. Fenton.

FENTON. Well, it's what sells the goods. I don't know how else to explain it exactly. I'll look it up in the dictionary. [_Takes dictionary and turns pages._] Here it is, ma'am. Per--per--why, it isn't in here. I guess they don't put in words that everybody knows. We all know what personality means. It's what sells the goods.

MARGARET. I adore a strong, virile, masculine personality.

FENTON. I don't quite get you, madam.

MARGARET. The men I know have so much of the feminine in them.

FENTON. Oh, "Cissies"!

MARGARET [_flirtingly_]. They lack the magnetic forcefulness which I like so much in you.

FENTON. I believe you are kidding me. Does that mean you like me?

MARGARET. That's rather an embarrassing question.

FENTON. You must or you wouldn't let me speak to you this way.

MARGARET [_archly_]. Never mind whether I like you. Tell me whether you like me?

FENTON [_feeling more at home_]. Gee! I didn't get on to you at first. Sure I like you.

MARGARET. Then we're going to be good friends.

FENTON. You just bet we are. Say, got a date for to-morrow evening?

MARGARET. No.

FENTON. How about the movies? There's a fine feature film at the Strand. Theda Bara in "The Lonesome Vampire," five reels. They say it's got "Gloria's Romance" beat a mile.

MARGARET. I don't know that I'd care to go there.

FENTON. How about a run down to Coney?

MARGARET. Coney! I've always wanted to do wild Pagan things.

FENTON. Say, you'll tell me your name, won't you?

MARGARET. Margaret Marshall.

FENTON. Do you mind if I call you Margie?

MARGARET. If you do, I must call you--

FENTON. Charley. Gee, I like the name of Margie. Some class to that.

MARGARET. I'm glad you like it.

FENTON [_moving nearer_]. And some class to you!

MARGARET [_coyly_]. So you really like me?

FENTON. You bet. Say, before I go, you've got to give me a kiss, Margie.

MARGARET. Well, I don't know. Aren't you rather "rushing" me?

FENTON. Say, you are a kidder.

[_He draws her up from her chair, and kisses her warmly on the lips._]

MARGARET [_ecstatically_]. You have the true Greek spirit! [_They kiss again._] If only Pommy would kiss me that way!

FENTON. Pommy? Who's Pommy?

MARGARET. Pommy is the man I live with.

FENTON. Your husband!

MARGARET. No, we just live together. You see, we don't believe in

marriage.

FENTON [_pushing her away in horror_]. I thought there was something queer about all this. Does he live here?

MARGARET. Yes. [_Points to door._] He's in there now.

FENTON [_excitedly_]. Good night! I'm goin'.

[_Looks for hat._]

MARGARET [_speaking with real anguish_]. You're surely not going just on that account.

FENTON [_taking hat and bag_]. Isn't that enough?

MARGARET [_emotionally_]. Please don't go. Listen, I can't suppress my feeling for you; I never do with anybody. I liked you the moment I saw you, I want you as a friend, a good friend. You can't go now, just when everything's about to begin.

FENTON [_severely_]. Fair's fair, Miss. If he's keeping you, you can't be taking up with me at the same time. That puts the finish on it.

MARGARET. But he doesn't keep me. I keep myself.

FENTON. Wait a minute. You support yourself, and live with him of your own free will. Then you've got no excuse for being immoral; 't isn't like you had to make your living at it. [_At door._] Good-by.

MARGARET. But I can explain everything.

FENTON. It's no use, Miss. Even though I am a salesman, I've got a sense of honor. I sized you up as a married woman when I came in just now, or I never would have made love to you at all.

MARGARET. Oh--wait! Supposing I should want to buy some more dictionaries.

FENTON [_returning_]. You've got my card, Miss. The 'phone number is on it. Bryant 4253. [_Sees Margaret hang her head._] Don't feel hurt, Miss. You'll get over these queer ideas some day, and when you do, well, you've got my number. So long, kid.

[_Exit Fenton, door, center._]

MARGARET [_taking his card from table and placing it to her lips soulfully_]. My Apollo, Bryant 4253!

PENDLETON. Did you get a good start with your scandal. [_Margaret hangs her head._] It's no use; I'm convinced we're in a hopeless muddle.

MARGARET. I heartily agree with you.

PENDLETON. You've changed your mind very suddenly.

MARGARET. I have my reasons.

PENDLETON. The fact is, Margaret, that so long as we live together we're public figures, with everybody else as our jury.

MARGARET. But lots of people read your books and respect us.

PENDLETON. The people that respect us are worse than the people that don't.

MARGARET. If they wouldn't always be bothering about our morals!

PENDLETON. If we continue living together, we shall simply be giving up our freedom to prove we are free.

MARGARET [_faltering_]. I suppose we ought to separate.

PENDLETON. I believe we should.

MARGARET. We'll have to give up the studio.

PENDLETON [_regretfully_]. Yes.

MARGARET. It's taken a long time to make the place homelike.

PENDLETON. We've been very comfortable here.

MARGARET. I shall miss you at meals.

PENDLETON. I shall have to start eating at clubs and restaurants again, no more good home cooking.

MARGARET. We're kind of used to one another, aren't we?

PENDLETON. It isn't an easy matter to break, after five years.

MARGARET. And there are mighty few studios with as good a light as this; I don't want to separate if you don't.

PENDLETON. But, Margaret. [_Piano starts playing wedding march._] There,

that confounded piano again. [_Seized with an idea._] Margaret, there's another way out!

MARGARET [_with same idea_]. You mean, we ought to marry!

PENDLETON. Yes, marry, and do it at once. That'll end everything.

MARGARET. Let's do it right away and get it over with; I simply must finish my Apollo.

PENDLETON. I'm going to buy you a new gown to get married in, a wedding present from Baroness de Meauville's.

MARGARET. I don't know that I want a De Meauville gown.

PENDLETON. Please let me. I want to give you something to symbolize our new life together.

MARGARET. Very well. And in return, I'll buy you a dictionary, so that I won't have to keep on correcting your spelling.

[_Exit Pendleton. Margaret goes to 'phone, and consults Fenton's card._]

MARGARET. Bryant 4253? Can I speak to Mr. Fenton? [_Enter Mrs. Abbey._] Mrs. Abbey. What do you think? We're going to get married!

MRS. ABBEY. Well, bless my soul! That's right. You can take it from me, ma'am, you'll find that respectability pays.

MARGARET [_at 'phone_]. Bryant 4253? [_Sweetly._] Is that Mr. Fenton? [_Pause._] Hello, Charley!

[_Curtain._]



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